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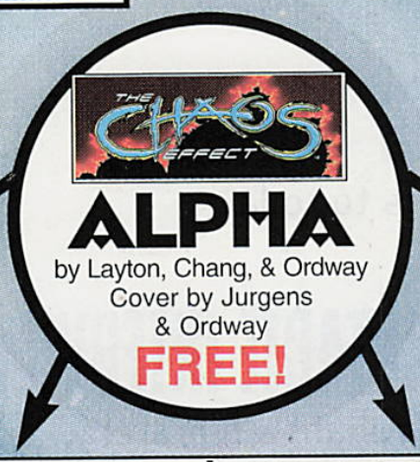

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Check it out!

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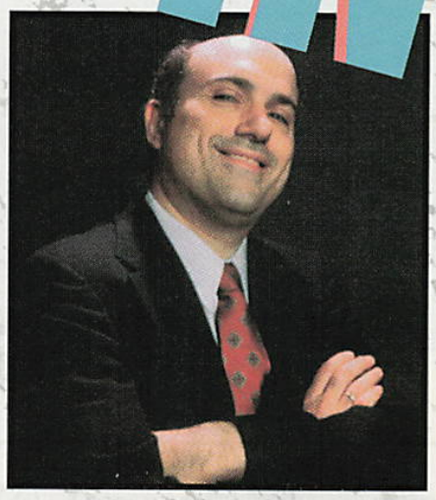

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Letter from the Publisher

Steve and Gareb discuss the finer points of keeping comics in pristine condition.

When *Wizard* first started out about three years ago, Valiant was also launching its superhero universe, starting out with *Magnus, Robot Fighter.* As time went by, people kept calling me and saying, "Have you read any of those Valiant comics? They're really excellent," and after hearing this a bunch of times, I decided to read a few of the company's early offerings. Needless to say, I was very impressed with the exciting storytelling, solid artwork, and extremely tight continuity these books had to offer. They really took me back in time to when I was little, rekindling some of the magic that comics first gave me. Soon thereafter, it appeared that I wasn't alone in my enjoyment of the Valiant line, as the company began to really make waves. Now, three years later, Valiant has had a remarkable success story, proving that good comics are enough to attract a strong readership base, and that innovation certainly hasn't gone out of style. Valiant has a commitment to its fans, as demonstrated by consistent product quality, an impeccable shipping schedule, and most of all, a great attitude. I've spent a lot of time with the people at Valiant, and can truly attest to their devotion and dedication to their fans.

Congratulations, Valiant, on a very successful three years in the comic book industry. After three years, you've gone from one title to fifteen; from just another beginning company to a major player.

It wasn't too long ago that I was only one of a few Valiant fans. Now, hundreds of thousands of fans enjoy Valiant comic books every day. Here and now, I'm glad to present to you Valiant's past three glorious years (with a few hints about its tremendous future).

Please read on and enjoy!

Always a fan,

THE BIG CHEESE '94

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Publisher

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President/Publisher
Gareb S. Shamus

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Rob Samsel

Associate Editors
Brian Cunningham
Pat McCallum

Art Director/Designer
Ben Glazer

Studio Assistant
Jonathan Marsland

Production Manager
Doug Goldstein

Copy Editor
Marc Wilkofsky

Editorial Assistant, Research
Dan Reilly

Editorial Assistant
Jennifer Winheim

Writers
William A. Christensen
Mark Seifert
Paul Fairchild
Bob Layton
Gareb S. Shamus
Rob Samsel

Photographers
Al Ortega
Joe Schuyler

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Publisher/C.E.O.
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Senior VP
Jon Hartz

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VP Marketing
Marty Stever

Direct Sales Manager
Paul Fairchild

Production Manager
Darren Sanchez

Special Projects Manager
Harry Eisenstein

Valiant Archivist/Research Assistant
Seaborn Adamson

Cover Art
Bernard Chang, Paul Autio

Color
Stu Suchit

Wizard Customer Service
Brenda Cook, Maria Signorino
(914) 268-3594

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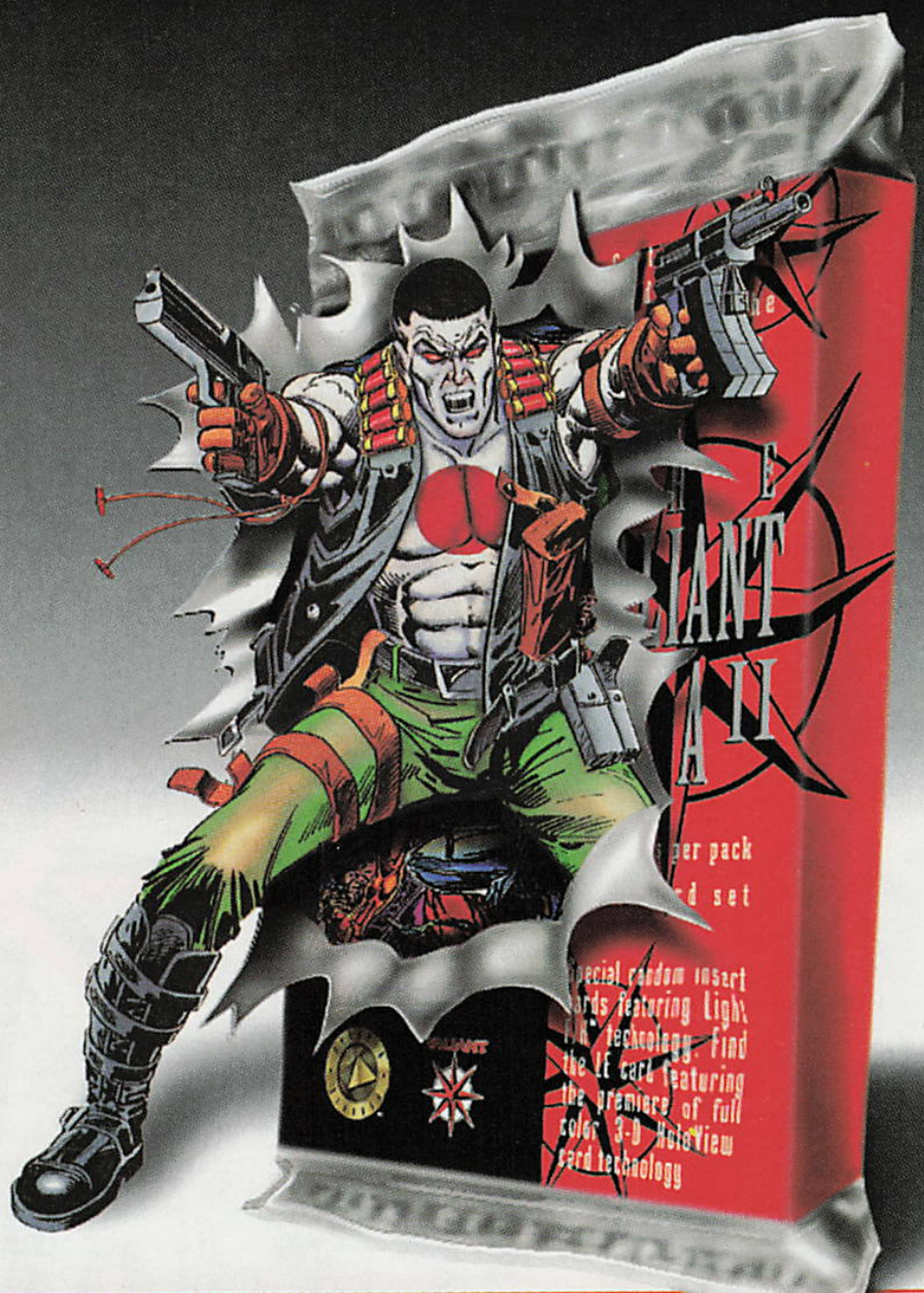

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The Beginning of the VALIANT ERA

and The Making of the Valiant Universe

A superhero universe is very tough to do right.

Anybody can get lucky with one character. Come up with the right combination of powers, or latch on to the right fad, or even just hit the market at the right time, and with a little luck, your hero will catch on. With talented creators writing and drawing, even the most mundane hero will sometimes sell.

But an entire superhero universe cannot get by on luck or even on the skills of a few individuals. It takes both business acumen and the creative vision of everyone involved to develop a superhero universe that will survive in this industry. It has happened only a few times in the past.

In 1938, after messing around for a while with marginally successful newspaper comic strip reprints, DC Comics (then known as National Periodical Publications) turned to superheroes with Superman. He caught on, and DC followed up with Batman, the Flash, and others—and by the time Wonder Woman had been created about three years later, the DC Universe had fallen into place, and during that time, it became the most exciting thing anybody had ever seen in comics.

In 1961, after messing around for a while with marginally successful "monster" comics and westerns, Marvel turned to superheroes with the Fantastic Four. They caught on, and Marvel followed up with Spider-Man, the X-Men, and others—and by the time Daredevil had been created about three years later, the Marvel Universe had fallen into place, and during that time, it became the most exciting thing anybody had ever seen in comics.

In 1991, after messing around for a bit with marginally successful Nintendo comics, Valiant turned to superheroes with Magnus. He caught on, and Valiant followed up with Solar, X-O Manowar, and others.

It's three years later.

Valiant Pre-History, Part 1: Dell Comics

Although, in a way, the events chronicled in this special represent just the beginning of the history of the Valiant Universe, some parts of the story go back over 60 years to the beginning of the comic business itself—to a series of events that led to the creation of Turok, Magnus, Solar, and other characters now inhabiting the Valiant Universe.

In 1929, the Dell Publishing Company, under founder George Delacorte, started the first newsstand publication of original comics. Unlike the books which had gone before, the company's tabloid-sized publication, called *The Funnies*, featured comic strips which had not been previously published elsewhere.

Although *The Funnies* was discontinued after little more than a year, its printer, Eastern Color Printing Company, used its experience to produce the first true comic book in the format we know today. That comic was *Funnies On Parade*, produced in the spring of 1933, to be used as a premium by Procter & Gamble. *Funnies On Parade* was followed by other premiums, such as *Century of Comics*, and *Funnies on Parade: A Carnival of Comics*.

Encouraged by the success of these giveaways, Eastern again joined with Dell in 1934 to produce a *Funnies on Parade* series in a 68-page format, with a cover price of 10 cents. *Funnies on Parade* was distributed through department stores, becoming the first true comic book to be sold. Still not completely convinced that comics could be profitable, Dell abandoned this project after this one-shot issue.

But soon after, other publishers proved the viability of the comic book business by using newsstand distribution. DC published its first newsstand comic, *New Fun Comics*, in 1935.

So Dell gave it another shot in 1936, publishing a comic called *Popular Comics*. This and other early efforts consisted exclusively of newspaper comic strip reprints. Then, in 1938, Dell hired a company then known as Western Printing & Lithography to package and print all-new comics for the Dell line. Western did have some previous experience with comics. In 1935, it began publishing *Mickey Mouse Magazine*. Although this promotional publication was in a magazine format, it did contain some newspaper strip reprints.

After moderate success with new material published first in comics format, Dell pioneered another area that has become familiar territory in comic book circles, that of licensing outside properties. The publisher struck a deal with Walt Disney Studios, and in 1940, the first issue of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* hit the newsstands. By the mid-1940s, *Comics and Stories* was selling in excess of one million copies per issue, and Dell quickly followed this success with other Disney titles. Western provided the material and printed all of these comics for Dell.

Licensing was enormously profitable for Dell, and the company soon exploited the concept to its fullest potential, by starting an anthology of licensed projects in 1941. Dell's *Four Color Comics*, in addition to the proven Walt Disney characters, included issues featuring characters from radio, television, movies, and other animation studios, notably

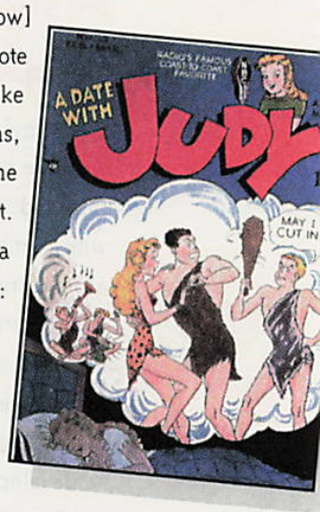
Walter Lantz (Woody Woodpecker), King Features (Popeye), and Warner Brothers (Bugs Bunny). Along with *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, *Four Color* became a flagship of the Dell line, eventually lasting for over 1,300 weekly issues.

Interlude: The King of the Comic Book Writers

Comic book writer Paul S. Newman was one of the many creators involved in the production of Dell Comics as it hit its stride as one of the industry's premier publishers. But Newman has a stronger claim to fame than most for shaping the comics that Western produced. Having written over 35,000 pages of comic books, Newman is currently considered the most prolific writer in the history of the comic book medium. Over 80% of the material he wrote was in association with Western.

After considering a career as a playwright, Newman stumbled into comic writing via the unlikely direction of radio. "One of my father's friends knew some people in radio, and they led me to the people who were doing *A Date with Judy*," Newman explains, referring to the popular radio show in these pre-TV days of the 1940s. "When I went up there, they looked at my samples of writing and thought I wrote good comedy, and asked me to submit ideas for a plot. I submitted two, and the man who read it said, 'Gee, you are so visual; this would be better for comic books than for the radio,' so they sent me over to DC Comics."

DC was doing an *A Date with Judy* comic book at the time, and after adjusting his style to writing comic books, Newman began writing that and other teen-humor comics. "I worked there with Bernie Breswell and Jack Schiff, and they picked one of the two stories [I had submitted to the radio show] and told me about how to write it [for comics]. I wrote it, and they said, 'That is nice, but we would like to make these revisions.' I made the revisions, and revised the revisions, and I re-revised the revisions, and at about the 10th version—I had it. That was my first story, and the next one was a lot easier. I was writing two books in those days: *Buzzy* and *A Date with Judy*."



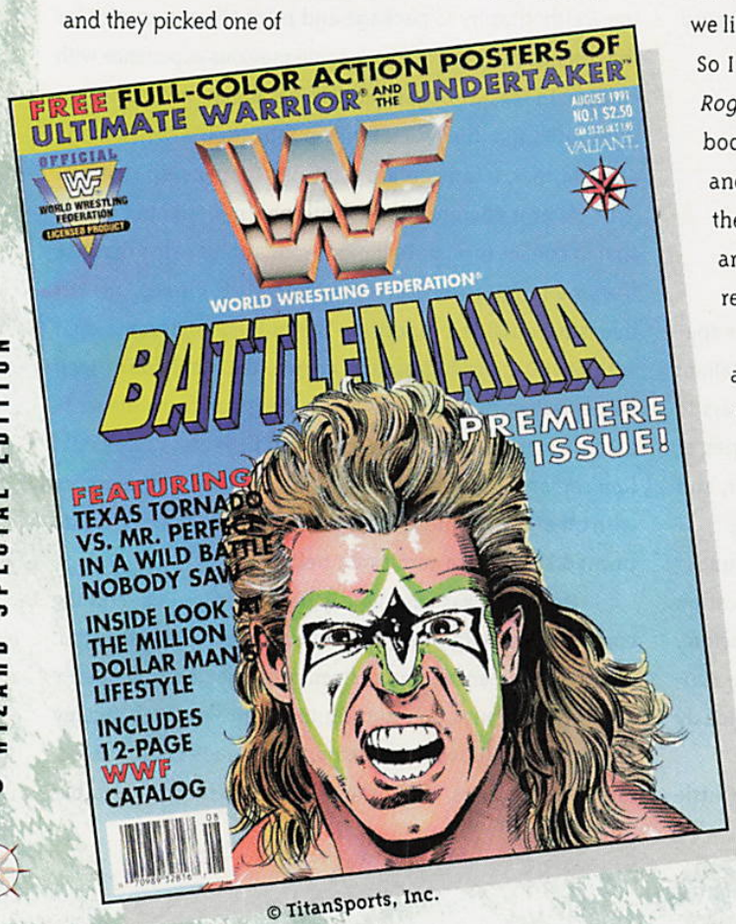
"I soon discovered there were other publishers in this field, so I started writing for Timely [later known as Marvel] with Stan Lee," Newman continues. His work at Marvel includes some 153 horror stories for comics like *Astonishing Tales*. He also worked for Hillman Publications on comics such as *Airboy*, and worked for several other publishers as well. "I wrote for about 10 publishers at one time," Newman recalls. "I'm a very, very fast writer, and I have a very quick imagination. I'm not a good writer, but I have two qualities that were important [then]—I was fast, and I never missed a deadline, and that is worth more than being a good writer to many editors."

Newman's speed and reliability, and maybe just a bit of that talent he's so quick to deny, eventually led him to work for Western. "Around the late 1950s, I began working for Western Publishing," Newman recalls. "It was one of the companies I hadn't broken into yet. I would go back to George Brenner, who was then the editor on 23rd Street [at the Western offices]. He liked what I wrote, but he had nothing for me."

But Newman didn't give up. "My father told me, when you have a good contact, keep it up. I went back about once a month for about 14 months, and then he said, 'Paul, we like your westerns, and we want you to do *Lone Ranger*.' So I wrote a plot for *The Lone Ranger*; I had written *Roy Rogers*, *The Two-Gun Kid*, and dozens of other western books by then. I sent it out to the Lone Ranger people, and they said, 'This is very good for Roy Rogers, but not the Lone Ranger.' So they flew me out [to their offices,] and I stayed in Detroit for about seven hours, and got a real indoctrination on how to write for *The Lone Ranger*.

"I started doing original stories for that book, and Western gave me other books to write for. By 1956, we had the [Comics] Code problem; a bunch of other [publishers] I had written for were off the map," says Newman, remembering how the institution of the Comics Code ultimately resulted in some publishers going out of business. "But I was doing very well, and Western put me under an exclusive contract. I began writing for Western like mad.

"My chief editor in the early days at Western was Matthew H. Murphy, and most of the books I wrote at Western were television [show adaptations]—based on licensed properties like *I Love*



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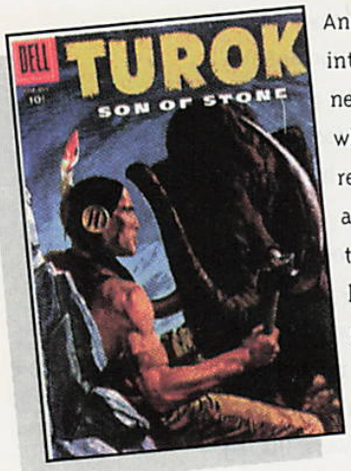
Lucy, Tweety and Sylvester, Steve Canyon, Jungle Jim, and dozens of others," Newman relates.

Newman was then to help shape a character who has become a pillar of the Valiant Universe.

Turok, Son of Stone

In addition to all of the licensed properties Newman worked on at Western, he also had a hand in some of the original properties the company developed. "There were only a couple of original books up at Western," he recalls. "The first was *Turok, Son of Stone*. I wrote that from issue #8 right to #134. I wrote 90% of those." Interestingly, *Turok* ceased publication with issue #130, so four issues remained unpublished.

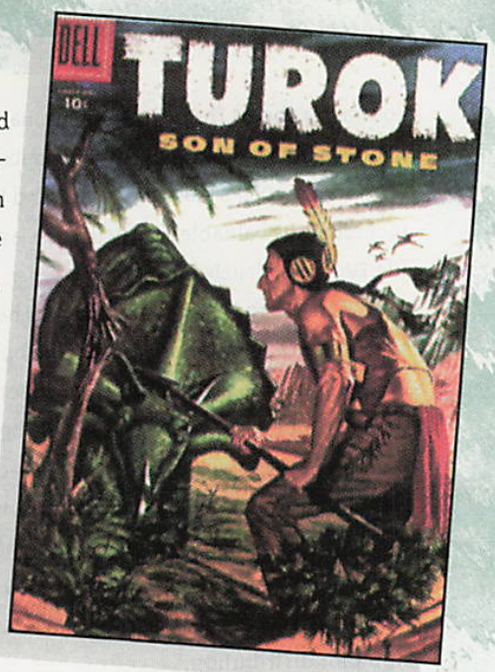
Turok first appeared in 1954, created by Western editor Matt Murphy. The series was beautifully illustrated by Al Giollitti. Turok had two try-out appearances in Dell's *Four Color* anthology before getting his own title, which started at #3. This counted *Four Color* #595 as *Turok* #1 and *Four Color* #656 as *Turok* #2. It was common practice for Dell to continue numbering from the *Four Color* issues if the property received its own title after a successful try-out.



In the Dell series, Turok and his travelling companion Andar were Native Americans who blundered into the Lost Valley in an area of New Mexico, near the Carlsbad Caverns. The valley was formed when some of the vast limestone caverns of the region collapsed, forming a huge valley with a stable climate, thus allowing prehistoric creatures to exist side-by-side with later types of life, including men. During the course of the series, the main thrust of the stories consisted of Turok and Andar's exploits as they tried to find their way out of the Lost Valley.

Over the course of Turok's 130 regular issues and one giant-size issue, he developed a small cast of supporting characters. Lanok, a primitive tribesman whom Turok and Andar trained to use a bow, first appeared in *Four Color* #656, and would occasionally meet up with the dino-fighting duo on their adventures. In *Turok* #84, Turok and Andar encountered a lost tribe of Aztecs, who had also wandered into the valley and couldn't get out. Hutec, one of the tribe members, joined Turok and Andar in their search for a way out of the Lost Valley for several issues. Andar even got a pet, a wolf-cub he named Ski-Yu, in *Turok* #6, but apparently the cuteness factor didn't sit well with the hard-core adventure fans who followed Turok. Ski-Yu only lasted three issues.

Shortly after Newman started in *Turok* #8, he began guiding the series in the direction that Silver Age Turok fans fondly remember. "I got rid of the horse they had in the Lost Valley of dinosaurs, and I got rid of the dog," he laughs. "I changed their ages, making Andar much younger and more impetuous at 15, and Turok older, more mature and steady."



But even then, part of Turok's appeal was the dinosaurs he fought. "We found out that any time we put in dinosaurs rather than prehistoric men [for Turok to fight], that issue sold better. It was the dinosaurs," says Newman, continuing that he endeavored to faithfully represent the true nature of the beasts. "I still have several books on dinosaurs. All the dinosaurs were accurate."

Fighting dinosaurs and hostile primitives for 130 regular issues and one giant issue made for an exciting life for Turok. As crafty then as he is today, Turok maintained his edge by keeping his secret of poison arrows to himself. Though he taught many tribes how to craft spears, bows, and arrows, he made it a point to insure that only he and Andar possessed poison-tipped arrows. He used this little insurance policy in virtually every issue. Perhaps his strangest pre-Valiant adventure took place in *Turok* #58. An alien spacecraft landed in the Lost Valley, and after Turok and Andar helped them fight off a group of dinosaurs, the aliens agreed to take the two out of the valley. Unfortunately, both the aliens and their spacecraft were destroyed by dinosaurs, and once again, Turok and Andar's hopes of escape were dashed.

Turok's original series ended in 1982, before he had a chance to get out of the Lost Valley.

Valiant Pre-History, Part 2: Gold Key

After over twenty years of riding high on the success of its licensed properties, Dell got a bit overconfident, and in 1961, became the first comic book publisher to raise the price of its regular titles above 10 cents. While Dell comics now carried a 15-cent tag, most other publishers managed to hold off price increases for another few months, and when they did raise their cover prices, they went no further than 12 cents. Dell's circulation plummeted overnight.

As a result of this fiasco, Dell decided its best course of action was to forego the costly licenses, and rely exclusively on in-house productions. At this point, Western determined that this was an unwise course of action, and in 1961, the company decided it could handle things better than its

contractor could. The company terminated its relationship with Dell, and started publishing comics on its own. Western took over Dell's most expensive (and lucrative) licenses, including the valuable Disney license, as well as high-profile TV licenses such as *The Lone Ranger.*

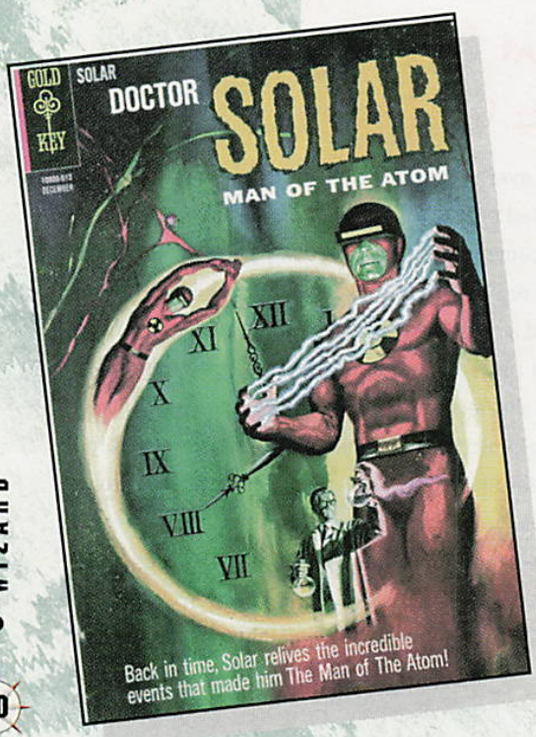
According to Newman, this may have made very little difference in who was creating the books for each company. "I was off the exclusive [contract with Western] in the early 60s," he says. "I wrote for both of them. They were just three blocks from each other on 3rd Avenue, so I would go from one to the other. I never quite made the break they made. I didn't have to become schizoid to write for both of them. When I came to New York, instead of making a one-stop plot distribution, I had to make a two-stop plot distribution."

The early 1960s were an explosive time for the comics industry. Marvel Comics had the industry reeling with the introduction of its new breed of superheroes, such as the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man, and DC's hero revival was also in full swing. Sensing the renewed interest in superheroics, Western, now using its new Gold Key logo imprint, decided to toss its hat into the superhero arena. Paul S. Newman says that the thrust behind the Gold Key superhero titles was Matt Murphy, whom he describes as "a brilliant creative generator of ideas."

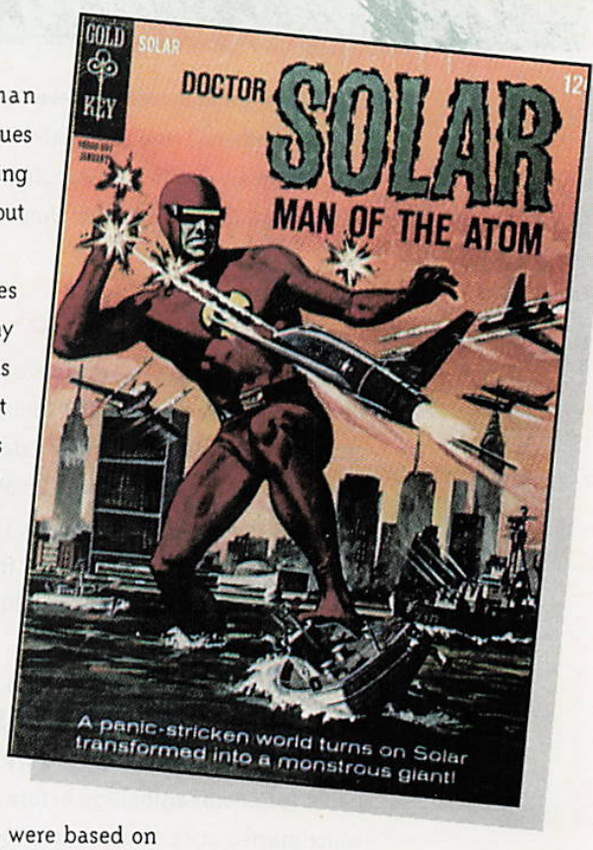
As Gold Key, Western was able to find its niche during the 60's, using a mix of its high-profile licenses, such as Star Trek, Disney, and Tarzan, alongside its own homegrown characters, such as Magnus, Turok, and Doctor Solar.

Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom

Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom premiered in his own book in October, 1962. Like Turok, Doc Solar was the creation of Western editor Matt Murphy.



Paul S. Newman wrote the first few issues of the series, continuing intermittently until about issue #17.



Newman opines that Solar, like so many heroes of the era, was very much a product of the times. "This was the time of the Bay of Pigs, a time [in which] people were still building bomb shelters," he recalls. "The atom bomb was very prevalent, and Murphy thought that we ought to have some characters who were based on the nuclear and scientific principles that were available at the time."

Solar's origin is very similar to Marvel's Incredible Hulk, and in fact, *Doctor Solar* #1 appeared on the stands a mere five months after *Hulk* #1 did. Doctor Solar was bombarded by atomic radiation while trying to save a fellow scientist from being exposed. As in *Hulk* #1, Doctor Solar's experiments were tampered with by a covert agent, and like the Hulk, what should have been a fatal dose of radiation turned Solar into something more than human, and turned his skin green as well!

That's where the similarity ends, however. While the Hulk's abilities are physical, Solar's are energy-based. After the accident, he found he could convert his body from matter into energy and back, and project energy from his body in a seemingly endless number of ways. Solar's skin turned back to normal when he wasn't using his powers. His regular cast consisted of only his girlfriend Gail Sanders and his friend and colleague Dr. Clarkson, both of whom were introduced during Solar's origin story in *Doctor Solar* #1. Even though he was a superhero in every sense of the word, he didn't have any real super-villains to fight. Most of Doctor Solar's adventures involved him combating natural disasters or foiling the plans of his only worthy nemesis, Nuro.

Nuro, who was also introduced in *Doctor Solar* #1, was a mystery man. He possessed both great wealth and great scientific knowledge, and his number one goal in life was the elimination of Doctor Solar, whom he inadvertently helped create when he ordered his agent to sabotage the atomic experiment Solar was working on. Nuro stayed behind the scenes for the early part of the *Doctor Solar* series, appearing only briefly in shadows.

Just as Nuro stayed undercover at first, so did Doctor Solar. He tried to keep his exploits out of the public eye.

Finally, that proved to be too much of a burden, and in *Doctor Solar* #5, Solar designed a costume for himself and went public, at the same time revealing his identity to his girlfriend Gail Sanders. In *Doctor Solar* #17, Nuro went more upscale with his activities, as well. He designed a sophisticated android, called Orun, which he was to use in many upcoming battles against Solar. Eventually, in issue #21, Nuro transferred his consciousness into his android. The new combination became known as King Cybernoid, and lasted until the series ended with issue #31 in 1982.

As he did with Turok, Newman tried to make the *Doctor Solar* book as scientifically accurate as possible. Western had a science advisor who had been a rocket scientist in Germany, and had fled to the U.S. during World War II. "I would call [the advisor] and say, 'We have got the spaceship heading toward Jupiter; what do I see?" Newman says. "He would say, 'Well, in the left corner, you will see the black spot of Jupiter...,' and it would sound like he returned from there three weeks ago, and was looking at his photo album."

"I had a fairly good background in physics and astronomy, but I did look things up. Occasionally, I would call up people at the Columbia [University] Department of Physics, and that sort of thing," Newman concedes. This research also served him well in the educational science back-up feature he wrote in *Solar*, which was called "Professor Harbinger".

Magnus, Robot Fighter 4000 AD

Magnus and his continent-spanning home of North Am were created, written, and drawn by Silver Age great Russ Manning, who was also noted for his work on Gold Key's *Tarzan* series. *Magnus* started in 1963, and ended with issue #46 in 1977. Issues #29 through #46 reprinted previous issues in random order, and issue #22 reprints Magnus's first appearance in issue #1, leaving a total of 27 original issues.

Manning developed a loose continuity in the series. Along with a regularly appearing supporting cast, Magnus acquired a small rogue's gallery. He squared off against his more persistent foes a handful of times in his 27 original adventures, and met a few friends along the way as well.

Magnus hit the ground running in his first issue, which chronicled his origin, and introduced the most important members of his supporting cast. Magnus was raised and trained by the intelligent robot 1-A. 1-A foresaw a day when robots might rebel against man, and trained Magnus to combat them, as well as implanting a robot receptor in his brain, which allowed him to hear robot communications.

Leeja Clane was Magnus's love interest. She was the beautiful daughter of an important North Am Senator. Poor Leeja would be kidnapped or otherwise harassed in virtually every issue, due to her association with Magnus. Leeja was introduced in Gold Key's *Magnus* #1.

In *Magnus* #2, Leeja's father Senator Clane made his first appearance, and Magnus met Mekman, the first of four major villains who would beleaguer him during his brief publishing life. Mekman was an insane human who admired robots so much he wanted to become one. He coated his skin with a super-flexible sheet of impenetrable steel in an effort to emulate robots. Furthermore, he was a master at creating robots that could emulate living things. In this issue, he created a Magnus robot, along with robots that looked like North Am's ruling council. Even though Magnus defeated him this time, Mekman returned in *Magnus* #11, with robots which looked like animals.

Even worse than Mekman was Xyrkol, another mad-scientist type who was interested in forbidden and dangerous technologies, which he would use in his quest to create powerful robots, become ruler of the Earth, and cause lots of trouble. Although his plans along these lines were foiled by Magnus in both *Magnus* #2 and *Magnus* #5, Xyrkol persisted, and in *Magnus* #7, his quest for exotic hardware brought him into contact with Malev-6, the robot planet.

Malev-6 was originally a robot in the form of a repair ship, which crash-landed on the sixth planet from the star Malev. Hard radiation from Malev altered its brain, making it a freewill robot. It soon expanded itself until it filled the entire planet, with ambitions to expand beyond the confines of its world. To help Magnus conquer Malev-6, Leeja enlisted the aid of the 1,000 people Magnus rescued in *Magnus* #1. It seems that because of their ordeal in that issue, these people had learned to coordinate their mind-force. Magnus was able to use that mind-force to disable Malev-6, or so he thought.

Malev-6 returned in *Magnus* #21, and enlisted the aid of Xyrkol and one Doctor Lazlo Noel. Doctor Noel was different from the usual mad-scientist type Magnus villain,

in that his goals and beliefs were very similar to those of Magnus. He felt that humans were too dependent on robots, and that mankind should be wary of a robot rebellion. In *Magnus* #13, Noel almost succeeded in his goal of kidnapping several people to start a colony of his own, far away from robots. Malev-6 used Xyrkol and Noel to create a robot powered by ectotheric energy. As Malev described it, ectotheric energy was "the psychic force from sub-space that Earthmen have unwittingly used for eons. The force that creates ghosts, poltergeists, and sorcery!" When Magnus learned who was behind the creation of the ecto-rob, he vowed to seek out Malev-6 and destroy it once and for all.

Before Magnus had the chance to do so, Malev-6 struck again in *Magnus* #24. This time it was kidnapping humans to use as a source of ectotheric energy. Magnus teamed up with Doctor Noel, who had become quite powerful due to his last encounter with Malev-6. During that adventure, Noel also learned the secrets of controlling ectotheric energy. Still, the robot-hating Noel was repulsed by the idea that this robot had controlled him, so he gladly set aside his past differences with Magnus to seek revenge on the robot planet. Once again, it appeared that the Malev planet was irrevocably destroyed.

In addition to the ever-present Leeja and Senator Clane, Magnus was occasionally aided by several other characters, including: Timbuc, a commander in North Am's defense; the Outsiders, a group of teenagers who shared Magnus's trepidations about robots; and Spikey the Goph, who lived in North Am's hazardous lower levels.

Although discontinued in 1977, Magnus gained a small reprieve in 1981, as a backup feature in the *Doctor Solar* title.

Valiant Pre-History, Part 3: The End of One Era, The Beginning of Another

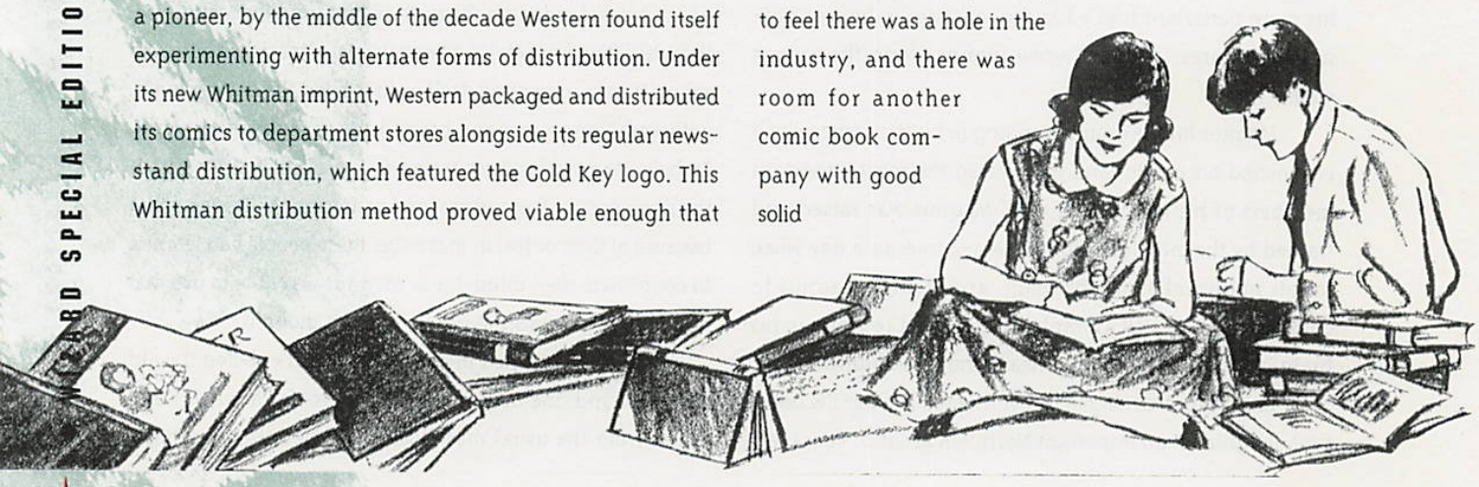
As most other publishers did during the early 70's, Western found the market in a state of change. The formulas that worked during the 1960s were no longer quite so successful for any publisher. Once again playing the role of a pioneer, by the middle of the decade Western found itself experimenting with alternate forms of distribution. Under its new Whitman imprint, Western packaged and distributed its comics to department stores alongside its regular newsstand distribution, which featured the Gold Key logo. This Whitman distribution method proved viable enough that Western even distributed some DC Comics in department stores using the Whitman logo. By 1981, Western was using the Whitman distribution exclusively, and in 1984, finally closed down the dwindling comic branch of its operations. That was the end of Solar, Magnus, and Turok for a few years, but as every comic fan knows, very few comic characters stay gone forever.

In 1987, Western—now a large publishing company with interests outside the comic book industry—attempted to buy Marvel Comics. The deal never happened, but the contact between Western Chairman Richard Bernstein and Marvel's Jim Shooter would later prove to be important. Bernstein told Shooter that if he ever wanted to start his own company, he could use the old Gold Key characters.

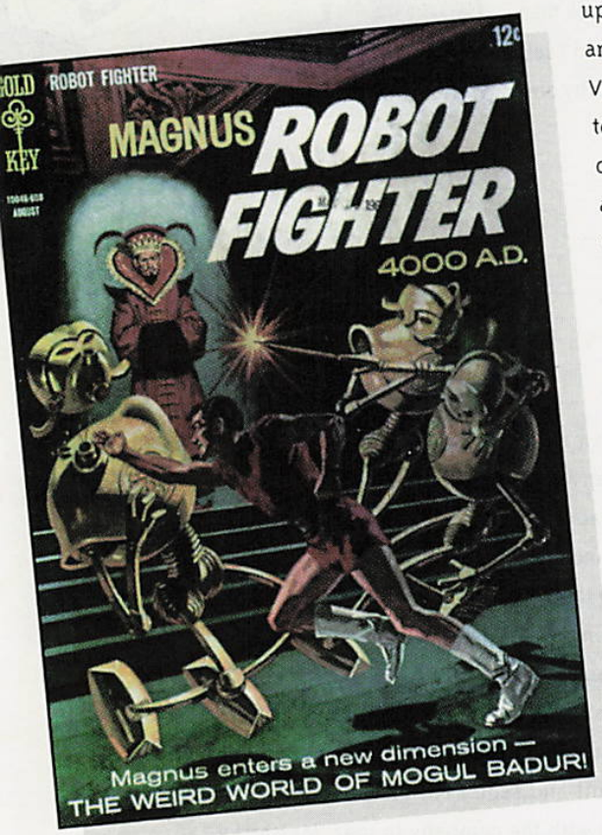
Meanwhile, soon-to-be Valiant co-founder Steven J. Massarsky's business dealings were bringing him closer to the realm of the comic book industry. "Around 1985, '86, I was brought in as a consultant for Parker Brothers, to do a [product] with a record company focusing on Cabbage Patch records; records based on the Cabbage Patch characters," Massarsky says. "In the course of doing it, I ran into a friend of mine who was an agent at [advertising agency] William Morris, and he suggested we put together a really good family entertainment show. Something where kids would be glad to go, because they would like the characters, and adults would like the music, and a teenager might like the special effects. A family show based on known characters.

"We approached Cabbage Patch with it, but we didn't get the license to do it. I spent about a year after that time looking for the right license, and I talked to an awful lot of people. Finally, I ran into one of the licensing guys for Marvel at a licensing show, and asked [him] about setting up a license for this. It took about a year, and in about early '87, I finally got a license for Marvel to do this wild tour show that I had in my mind. The day I got the license was the day Jim Shooter had been fired at Marvel," Massarsky notes.

Even though Shooter and Marvel had just parted company, Marvel recommended Shooter to Massarsky to write the tour show. "So I worked with Jim on the concept of doing this show, and he actually wrote it," says Massarsky. "In the course of working together and learning about Marvel and how things work, we began to feel there was a hole in the industry, and there was room for another comic book company with good solid



marketing ideas. People who really thought of comics as entertainment. Out of those discussions, Valiant was born."



But before setting up shop with Magnus and company, the two Valiant partners tried to acquire some other characters. "We took a run at buying Marvel," Massarsky says. "It was sort of a silly run. We didn't have [the right] financing together. We had the Chase Manhattan Bank interested in being our ventured group, but they weren't putting up any equity. In order to make a deal like this, you need both equity and debt financing. We kind of went into the deal with no equity, just somebody saying, 'I'll lend you some money', and in the end, we weren't even among the bidders finally put together."

"Jim always tells the story differently than I do," Massarsky says. "He always explains how we were the second highest bidder. What [actually] happened was that on the eve of the bidding, we ran around to everybody who we heard might be bidding on the company, and said, 'If you get the company, we are a good management team to run the company for you.' There was a group called Sheckman Capital, and they were the only other bidder at the end of the process, other than Ron Perleman. Sheckman Capital said, in effect, when we met with them that day, 'If we get the company, we will consider the possibility of you being the management team.' It was not like we were the second highest bidder—*they* were the second highest bidder. They were the only other bidder, and they had no commitment to us, so in reality, we never were in the final bidding for it. When that was over, we decided to put together our own company."

"We went out and got some venture capital funding, and put together what is now Valiant," explains Massarsky. Massarsky and Shooter then approached Western about taking them up on their offer of a few years before. "That is how we wound up getting Magnus, Solar and Turok. After we put the company together, we went to Richard Bernstein, saying, 'Here is our own thing, we are ready...can we have the characters?'"

Interlude: The King of the Comic Book Marketers

With a company put together and characters to use, Massarsky began to look for people to help him run his business. Jon Hartz became Valiant VP-Marketing in 1991, after working in virtually all other aspects of the comic book business. "I worked for Neal Adams from 1984 until the early part of 1990, when I left Continuity," Hartz says. "I didn't do comics; I did commercial art work for [Continuity owner Neal Adams]. I was a production manager, a sales rep for a while, and then an art director for him. I left Neal on a very amicable basis. After I left, I still did a large amount of freelance work for him, coloring comics and drawing and coloring commercial advertising work for him."

Hartz then hooked up with Massarsky via artist Art Nichols. "Art knew that Massarsky was looking for a direct sales manager," says Hartz. "I was very familiar with the direct market and how it worked, and how the retailers and distributors dealt with things, and all of the infrastructure of the direct market. Massarsky made me an offer that I couldn't refuse.

"I had been a fan, worked retail, and worked as a distributor. I boxed comics, packed comics, sold comics, marketed comics, colored comics, and I've written them, and I felt, with all of that experience, I was ready to go back and work for some type of fledgling company," Hartz explains. "I'm almost overqualified to go to a place like Marvel or DC, because they wouldn't know where to put me in their structure. But for a brand-new company coming up the pike, I was in the perfect position. I was the perfect kind of guy, because all new companies have to have people who can wear a bunch of different hats, and I can probably wear more hats than anybody in the industry, because I have had experience in all the different areas. So it seemed like a real natural fit when I got here."

Valiant Pre-History, Part 4: The Nintendo Years

After having acquired the Western characters, Valiant went shopping for properties that were immediately marketable outside the traditional comic book direct market. "We were in a meeting with the licensing agency for the Shadow, Green Hornet, Charlie Chan, Terry and the Pirates, Nintendo and a few other things," Massarsky recalls. "We were talking to them about what we could do together, and mostly talking about Green Hornet (which they had already licensed to Now) and the Shadow and Terry and the Pirates. They said, 'What about Nintendo?', and we bit."

Massarsky and Shooter put together a business plan based on doing Nintendo comics and reprinting the Gold Key Magnus material. Unfortunately, there were problems

with executing both parts of this plan. "Nintendo...wasn't well done," Massarsky admits. "With all due respect to all the creators who worked real hard at putting that together, Nintendo comics—the way I envisioned it when we first took the license—were sort of a behind-the-scenes look at these characters. What are their lives like when they are not chasing [characters] along that little line? Instead, what we got was sort of a bad Saturday morning, Abbott and Costello episode where it was one joke. Every book was one 32-page joke.

"We were also sold on a format with [the Nintendo comics] where the books were actually costing us more to make than we could sell them for. There were so many mistakes made in the early days of Nintendo that we just didn't get it—it was just wrong."

The Magnus trade paperbacks—exciting though they would have been—also proved to be a misstep. "The original concept that Jim [had] is that we would put out Magnus trade paperbacks at $7.95, and sell 100,000 of each trade paperback," recalls Massarsky. "That didn't happen then, and it wouldn't happen now. I think we solicited the Magnus trade paperback of the old Russ Manning stuff. Our orders were under 100,000, and we looked at it and said, 'We are in trouble; let's go to plan B, and let's roll out the new stuff."

And so, instead of publishing the Magnus TPBs, they did roll out the new stuff, in the form of *Magnus* #1, in March 1991. But Valiant then tried another outside license. This time it was WWF Wrestling, but like Nintendo, the property was difficult to translate into comics. "[The wrestling line] was really short-lived for a lot of reasons," laments Massarsky. "One, because of the constant change in wrestling scenarios, we couldn't keep up with it fast enough. We would have a guy who was a good guy, and before the book came out, they would call and say, '[You] can't use the [wrestler] that way, because he is a bad guy now.' Finally, I walked in there one day and told them, 'With all due respect to what you guys are doing here and your wonderful organization, we make almost no money on this. With the amount of re-dos and changes you guys want on this thing, it costs me more to do any wrestling book than a superhero book, and I sell one-tenth as many. Why am I doing this?'"

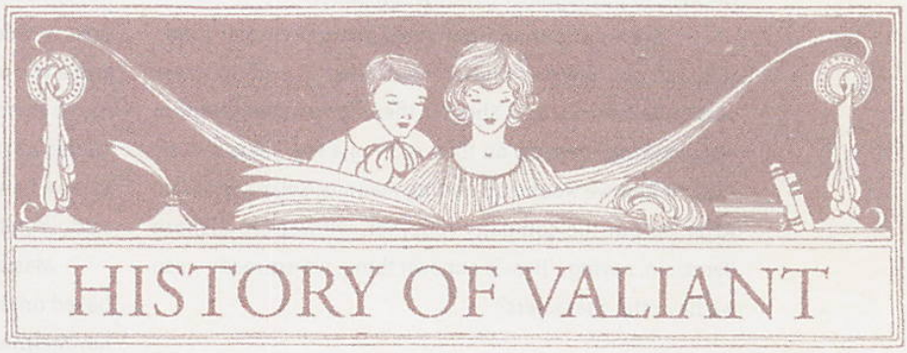
Valiant History: Part 0

So Valiant came together as a company, suffered brief distractions from Nintendo and the WWF, and began to get down to the business of creating the Valiant Universe.

People came and went during Valiant's formative years. Talented creator Barry Windsor-Smith served a time as creative consultant and senior editor. Co-founder Jim Shooter parted ways with the company in 1992. Massarsky credits Shooter as being the catalyst for the company in the early days. "He knew me and brought me in here. He knew Bob Layton and brought Bob in. He knew Don Perlin and brought Don in. A lot of the early generation guys here were brought in as people that Jim knew," Massarsky says.

Layton's arrival in particular proved to be important to the Valiant Universe's birth. "Bob is really responsible for a lot of the characters and a lot of the history in the Valiant Universe. There are a whole bunch of things that Bob either did himself or led the team in doing," says Massarsky. Certainly all of the people involved in the evolution of the company played a role in the genesis of the Valiant Universe.

In the intervening three years, the Valiant Universe has come to fruition, as the culmination of years of hard work and comic book history—and the beginning of a new era of that history.



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UNITY™

TIME IS NOT ABSOLUTE

When Phil Seleski accidentally created a black hole that threw him back in time, he caused irrevocable change throughout existence. The universe he came back to was not quite the one he had destroyed. Unknown to Phil, his former colleague Erica Pierce survived the black hole and was likewise thrown back in time. Unbalanced by an abusive father as a child and a miserable life as an adult, Erica had been an adversary of Seleski's even before the black hole. Now she was determined to destroy him and the altered universe that was his legacy. Like Phil, she possessed the ability to manipulate energy of any kind. Erica hid on Earth for centuries, all the while developing her plan for revenge against the man who had become Solar.

She unfolded a plan to bring order and unity to all of existence by ending this reality and creating a new one. Using hand-picked assistants who treated her as a god, Erica built up a secluded haven in what eventually became North Am. After discovering the Lost Land, she moved her haven there, and proceeded with her plan to bring about Unity. The Lost Land was a place outside of existence where time was absolute. It was thus a perfect place from which to launch a plan to end all of time.

Her only obstacle proved to be the heroes of Earth, who banded together in an effort to thwart her plans. Although she had legions of warriors from the 1800's, robots from the 41st century, and bionically-enhanced dinosaurs (known as Bionisaurs) to fight for her, the heroes eventually prevailed. Solar locked Erica in a cincture wormhole of non-existence. Moments later, the Lost Land was transformed into a zone of unreality when Solar took the mass of a black hole that Erica's reactors had created, and changed it into energy. The threat of Unity had ended, and since there was no longer a Lost Land, it couldn't be tried again.

Although Erica hadn't succeeded in creating Unity, the Valiant Universe was still changed profoundly by her plan. One of Earth's greatest champions, the Rai named Tohru Nakadai, died while preventing Unity. He fought a valiant fight (pun intended) against Pierce, but not before Japan fell from its orbit, crashing onto Detroit (a slight bit of irony). The legendary robot fighter from 41st century North Am, Magnus, was born, son of the deceased Harbinger Torque and Kris Hathaway, girlfriend of the Harbinger Sting. Shadowman learned from his 41st century lover Elya that he is destined to die in 1999. Geomancer Geoff McHenry learned of the existence of the dormant Bloodshot at Project Rising Spirit. Turok and many of the Lost Land's dinosaurs were flung into a 20th century civilization that was ill-prepared to receive them.

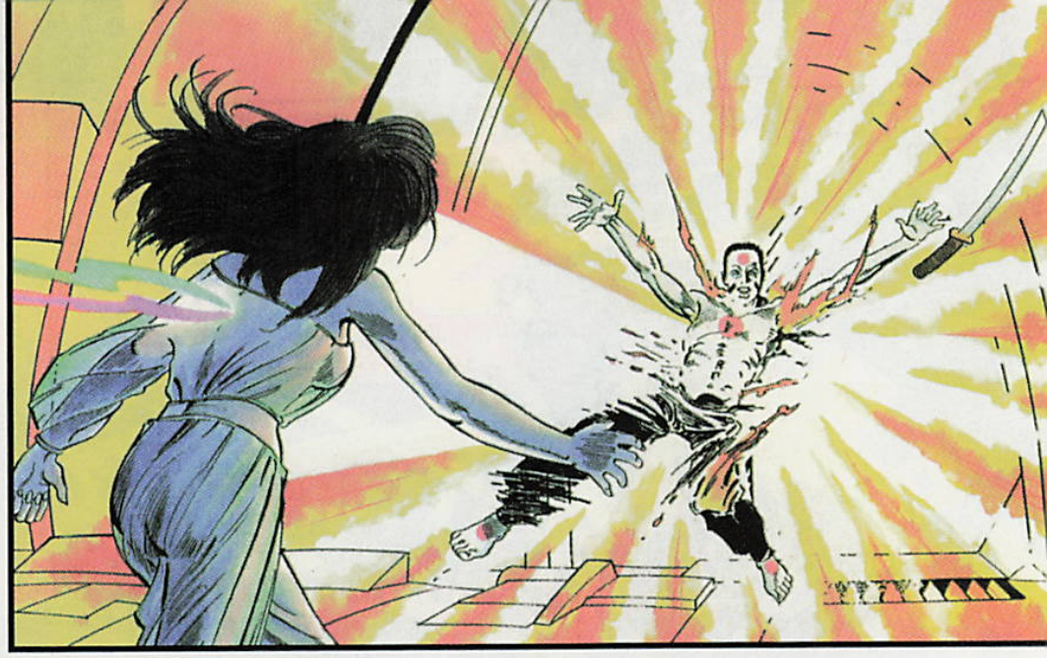
The Valiant Universe survived this disaster, but what startling changes would another cataclysm cause?

The Chaos Effect

Although only in the early planning stages at the time of this interview, there was a lot of excitement in the Valiant offices about what will undoubtably be one of comics' biggest events in 1994: Chaos Effect. This event will affect the entire Valiant Universe like nothing has before.

According to Valiant VP Marketing Jon Hartz, Chaos Effect is going to center around a major disaster in the Valiant Universe. "Just like there was an earthquake in Los Angeles a few months ago, and all of us within the comics community know certain retailers out there, we know Harlan Ellison, we know Malibu Comics, and we know guys from Image [who were all struck by the tragedy]. Every one of those guys has a story to tell about where they were the day that disaster hit. That is what the Chaos Effect is about. It is an interactive storyline."

"The idea is that on a certain day in the summer, [a vast quantity of] necromantic energy is inadvertently released by Ivar," Hartz continues. As a result, the characters in the Valiant Universe who use necromantic energy will receive godlike power.



Of course, there are many heroes and villains in the Valiant Universe who will be affected by such an event. Dr. Mirage, Shadowman, Dr. Eclipse, Master Darque and Sandria all manipulate necromantic energy, and we will learn about others who use necromantic energy as this catastrophe occurs. "There are people who may actually be tapping into this necromantic power and be affected by this [who] you may only have an inkling of," Hartz says, and adds that the effects won't be limited to necromantic energy. "Solar will be affected by this. All electromagnetic waves will be affected by this. All of a sudden, computers will go down, electricity will go down, planes will crash...this is a disaster of epic proportions to the Valiant world."

The storyline is so epic that it can't be told in the traditional sequential comic book fashion. "When you try to sit down and tell the story of World War II, or you try to sit down and describe in total the story of billions of people, you can't do it chapter by chapter—it is too immense," Hartz relates, adding that Chaos Effect will have that kind of magnitude.

The Chaos Effect saga will consist of *Chaos Effect Alpha*, four middle chapters involving the regular titles, and *Chaos Effect Omega*. Each of the middle chapters is comprised of a single issue from a group of related Valiant titles. According to Hartz, Chaos Effect is structured so that readers will be able to follow the chronicle, no matter which Valiant titles they follow. "We at Valiant are always very consumer-conscious, so we don't want to write this [story] in such a way that all of the consumers have to buy every single comic book," he says. "If they really want to find out what happened to X-O, for example, they can read the same books they normally read. The only book they will have to read to understand what is going on is *Chaos Effect Alpha*, which is the first part. If they so choose, they can also read *Chaos Effect Omega*, which is the ending storyline."

"The *Chaos Effect Alpha* chapter will be one 16-page book. It will be given away free, like we did with *Unity* [#0]," Hartz continues. "Every retailer will get two copies [for each copy of their lowest-ordered Valiant title] that month, and along with that, we will give retailers [the opportunity] to buy extra copies at a very low price."

Each of the four middle chapters will chronicle the consequences of Chaos Effect on a different aspect of the Valiant Universe. "The Beta Group is where the major focus of necromantic power is happening," Hartz explains. "Everybody will be surprised at how Turok fits in there. The Gamma Group is something that is happening in outer space—a whole adventure going on that you will be seeing from different points of view. On the Earth—the Delta Group—there are going to be some major, major things happening." The Delta Group will include *Archer & Armstrong/Eternal Warrior* #26, a double-sized saga that combines those two titles into a single book for one issue (just like *Archer/Eternal* #8). The Epsilon Group includes the surprising addition of Solar. *Rai*, *Magnus*, and *Starwatchers* take place in the 41st century, so it will be interesting to see how the Man of the Atom fits into this chapter of Chaos Effect. The saga will conclude in *Chaos Effect Omega*, a 32-page comic.

"The ramifications of what happens here are going to be taking place for months and years afterwards," Hartz claims. One of the most immediate consequences of Chaos Effect will be the new Valiant title *Geomancer*, which will be beginning in July.

And there will be several other repercussions of the Chaos Effect saga, affecting all of the Valiant titles. As Hartz concludes, "It will change the course of the Valiant Universe." ☆

CHAOS EFFECT CHRONOLOGY

- **Chaos Effect Alpha** .....16-page opening chapter
- **Beta Group**.....*Dr. Mirage* #11, *Shadowman* #29, *Turok* #16, *Secrets of the Valiant Universe: Master Darque* #2
- **Gamma Group**.....*Bloodshot* #20, *Secret Weapons* #13, *Ninjak* #8, *Archer & Armstrong/Eternal Warrior* #26
- **Delta Group** .....*X-O Manowar* #33, *Armorines* #5, *H.A.R.D. Corps* #23, *Harbinger* #34
- **Epsilon Group** .....*Magnus* #41, *Rai and the Future Force* #26, *Starwatchers* #3, *Solar* #38
- **Chaos Effect Omega**.....32-page conclusion

SOLAR
MAN OF THE ATOM
The Men of the Atom

The Man of the Atom was born at the Edgewater Advanced Fusion Research Center in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Doctor Philip Seleski was a brilliant Nuclear Physicist on staff at Edgewater, and the experimental fusion reactor on line there was largely based on his theories.

One evening, while he was relaxing at home, he was startled by an explosion and a bright flash of light from Edgewater. His worst fears had come true: something had gone wrong with the reactor. He raced to the facility. If someone couldn't do something, the experimental reactor might take all of North America with it when it blew. Feeling responsible for the imminent deaths of thousands, if not millions, of people, Phil leapt into the reactor core itself in a desperate attempt to do something—anything—to avert this tragedy.

And somehow, he succeeded. The reactor just stopped releasing energy. Technicians recovered Phil's horribly burned body, and discovered that he was still alive. Miraculously, Phil had survived being cooked alive in the plasma of the fusion core, and it had turned him into something more than human.

In fact, he was no longer human at all. His mind simply simulated a human body for him out of pure energy. He found that he could absorb, emit, and manipulate electromagnetic radiation of any frequency. He began using his powers to shut down dangerous nuclear power plants all over the world. Phil Seleski had become more god than man, and he had begun to act on nobody's authority but his own.

But that didn't mean that he had lost touch with his humanity. He still craved human companionship, particularly when it involved his co-worker and the longtime object of his affection, Gayle Nordheim. One night, he attempted to show her what it was like to be a being of energy, but she became afraid and ran away from him. But his other colleague Erica Pierce was not afraid. She took his hand, and he took her to a point outside time and space, teaching her the true nature of reality. In doing so, he also revealed to both of them something of her own true nature.

The experience was a horrible one for her, and while she gained a measure of Phil's power from it, she also came to hate him for what he had shown her about herself. Pierce decided that Phil was a monster that had to be destroyed. She developed weapons which were powered by her newfound energy, and attacked him.

To defend himself, Phil absorbed the power of a distant star. This prevented Erica from attacking him again, but he did not fully understand the implications of what he'd done. As he embraced Gayle to celebrate his victory, she suddenly became very ill. She was dying from radiation exposure, for his body contained far more energy than he could safely contain. Unthinkingly, he turned the tremendous energy of his body into mass, and almost instantly became a black hole, destroying the entire Earth in the process.

Entering the "Real" World

The black hole somehow tossed Phil Seleski back to a time before the accident at Edgewater, to a universe that had been subtly changed by the event. He quickly realized the horrific magnitude of what he had done. Unable to cope with the fact that he had caused the death of billions, Phil's subconscious created a physical manifestation of one of his childhood heroes—the comic book character Dr. Solar—from his own psyche. Dr. Solar was complete with all of Phil's abilities and memories, and had a burning desire to bring Phil to justice for what he'd done.

While Dr. Solar attempted to defeat the "villainous" Phil Seleski, that Phil attempted to prevent the Phil Seleski native to this time from making the mistakes that lead to the explosion of the fusion core at Edgewater. Although he failed to prevent the incident, by merging with both Dr. Solar and the Phil of this world, he was able to deal with its consequences, much as he had in his own universe. The Phil Seleski of this universe received the awesome energy-manipulation powers of his otherworldly counterpart, but with the knowledge of the mistakes his counterpart had made. He, too, wanted to use his power to help mankind, but he needed to live a normal life as well. Thus, Phil adopted the identity of his comic book hero Dr. Solar, and became Solar, Man of the Atom.

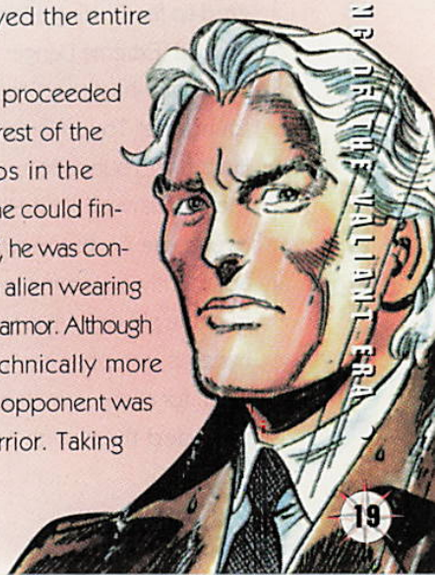
Life as a Hero

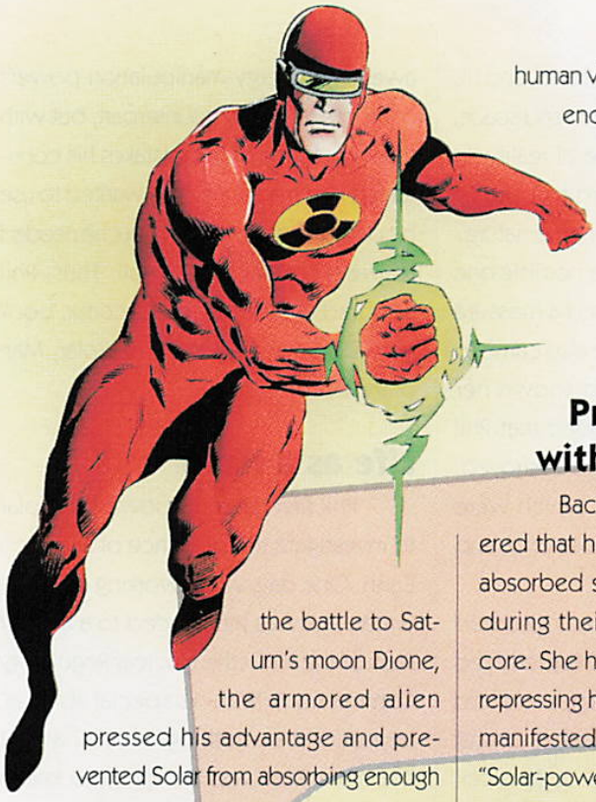
Phil first used his powers as Solar to investigate the presence of aliens on Earth. One day, while working at Edgewater, Phil was introduced to a Doctor Rusk of the NRC (the Nuclear Regulatory Commission). With his special abilities, he noticed something unusual about the man. Rusk was emitting no background radiation, as any normal human would. Probing further, Phil was shocked to discover that Rusk had an inhuman cellular structure. After work, Phil trailed Rusk to a company called Orb Industries, and found the entire building full of similar aliens.

When he confronted the aliens as Solar, they told him that their intentions were benevolent. But they were poor liars, and Solar traced one of their operations to Peru. After fighting them there, Solar headed into space to tackle their fleet.

He discovered gigantic ships—10 to 15 kilometers in diameter—orbiting Saturn. Entering one of them, he encountered a huge group of humans being held captive. Solar attempted to use these humans as his "Solar Squad" to subdue the aliens on the ship, but the plan backfired when the aliens were able to turn the tables on him and use them as hostages. Feeling that he had no other choice, Solar destroyed the entire ship.

He then proceeded to attack the rest of the 600,000 ships in the fleet. Before he could finish them all off, he was confronted by an alien wearing X-O Manowar armor. Although Solar was technically more powerful, his opponent was a trained warrior. Taking





the battle to Saturn's moon Dione, the armored alien pressed his advantage and prevented Solar from absorbing enough energy to recover. Striking what he expected to be the death blow, the alien released energy-dissipating filaments which enveloped Solar and threatened to steal his remaining power. However, Solar had detached one of his hands and dispatched it to the sun, in order to absorb vast quantities of power. When he acquired this energy, it gave him 10 times the power he had at the beginning of the conflict. Solar then easily dispatched his foe, leaving his dead body on Saturn. Phil chased the rest of the fleet so far into space that he got lost on the way back. He didn't return to Earth until about 10 months later.

After returning, Phil determined to wipe out any aliens left on Earth. Investigating the Orb Industries building where he first encountered the aliens in Chicago, he discovered that the FBI was on the case as well. Solar used his powers of energy manipulation to infiltrate FBI computers to find out what they had uncovered so far. Finding a location in Bangkok marked "Extreme Danger" in the computer file, Solar hastened to investigate. He found that Toyo Harada, owner of the Harbinger Foundation, was investigating the site as well, but Harada had been overcome by the woman in charge—apparently a Harbinger with the power to create powerful illusions. Solar defeated her, thus disrupting her "underground railroad" for aliens stranded on Earth, which provided them with safe havens and human victims to devour. In a previous encounter, Harada had learned of Solar's accident which had destroyed his world, and considered him very dangerous. Despite Solar's aid in this endeavor, Harada still disliked and distrusted Solar.

Problems with Erica

Back at Edgewater, Phil discovered that his colleague Erica Pierce had absorbed some of the energy released during their problems with the fusion core. She had apparently been mentally repressing her powers, but they suddenly manifested themselves in the form of a "Solar-powered" baby. Of course, a newborn with the power of Solar quickly became dangerous beyond imagination, and after battling the child, Solar allowed it to dissipate into nothing.

Erica became unbalanced by this sequence of events, and one night, after her abusive husband had pushed her too far, she killed him. She, in turn, was then killed by the Erica Pierce from the Earth that Solar had accidentally destroyed. Like him, this Erica had survived the catastrophe and was somehow thrown back through time to a slightly different reality. Erica determined that Solar's accident had somehow altered all of reality, and soon made plans to destroy him and the reality he had created.

After Solar had survived an encounter with some of Harada's Eggbreakers and the Eternal Warrior, he and Geoff the Geomancer determined what had happened. Investigating the Lost Land, they discerned something of Erica's purpose, and set about gathering other heroes to help oppose her. However, Solar found that Pierce was ready for him. He raced to confront her, but when he was distracted by Shadowman (who believed Solar himself to be the demon he was supposed to fight), Erica was able to use her equipment to trap Solar inside a cincture wormhole.

Without Solar's aid, the rest of the fighting force that Geoff had assembled was ineffective against Pierce herself, so they concentrated their efforts on freeing the Man of the Atom. In a final effort that resulted in the death of Rai, the group managed to liberate him when Sting entered his mind and helped him push his way out of the wormhole. He broke free just in time to interrupt Erica as she was using the power of her own body to fire up her Unity reactor, which would have destroyed all existence. After sealing her in another cincture wormhole, Solar was able to shut down the reactor and return most of the people involved in Unity to their proper times, just before the Lost Land was destroyed.

Solar returned from this months-long ordeal (during which very little time had passed in the real world) to attempt to live a normal life with his girlfriend Gayle Nordheim. The impending closure of the Edgewater facility in Oklahoma by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission meant that they could both get a fresh start somewhere. Unfortunately, Phil's responsibilities as Solar kept interfering with their relationship. After Solar prevented the persistent Fred Bender from becoming another Man of the Atom, he was contacted by his longtime antagonist Toyo Harada.

Although Harada had considered Solar a threat to the world in the past, he seemed willing to make peace so that they could join the battle against their common foes, the Spider Aliens. Harada had discovered a Spider Alien base on the dark side of the moon, and persuaded Solar to destroy it. Travelling to the base, Solar stumbled upon an odd ritual underway. The aliens were waiting for the seed of Shanhara—the X-O Manowar armor controlled by Aric—to complete its transformation into a new Manowar suit. The new X-O could then be transformed into a ship with which they could return to their home planet.

Aric had been transported to the moon against his will by Shanhara, and Solar tried to convince him to let the aliens have the seed so he could trail them back to their home planet and destroy their entire race. Aric would not agree to let them have the seed, but the two did formulate a plan whereby Aric would distract the Spider Aliens while Solar searched their computers for the location of their

world. However, the "First Among Equals"—the leader of the base—had anticipated this, and removed all pertinent data from their equipment. Thus, Solar was forced to destroy the entire base.

Finally, Phil and Gayle got their chance to start fresh. They moved to Cupertino, California, where they got jobs at Berkeley—Phil at Lawrence Berkeley Physics Lab, and Gayle at Keck Observatory. Things seemed to be going quite smoothly until they took part in a virtual reality experiment at nearby Berkeley Exhibit Hall. A glitch in the VR program somehow created a virtual reality creature which wouldn't let Gayle leave the simulation. Phil entered the simulation to save her, but found himself powerless in this virtual reality. Reading Phil's thoughts, the creature revealed to Gayle how Phil had loved and destroyed a different Gayle Nordheim before the accident that thrust him back in time to this reality. The V.R. creature then somehow linked with Gayle in order to study her, but in doing so, it inadvertently gave Gayle control over the virtual reality world. Gayle used that control to destroy the creature, and she and Phil were able to leave the simulation. Their adventure was over, but it was not without consequence.

Gayle was furious that Phil had never revealed that he had known another Gayle Nordheim in the world he destroyed. She felt like he was using her to replace the Gayle he had destroyed. The couple began to argue, and the situation escalated to the point that Gayle decided to stay with a friend for a few days. This seemed to have a tremendous impact on Phil. He couldn't even concentrate on his duties at Lawrence Berkeley. As Solar, he began to roam the countryside, directionless.

Unknown to Phil, he was being controlled by Master Darque. Darque had learned that Solar was responsible for the "Darque Power"—the necromantic energy that was the result of the deaths of the creatures of the Earth that Phil's black hole destroyed. Darque knew that if he could make Solar recreate his accident in this time and reality, Darque would receive the power of a god from the direct access to so much necromantic energy. Darque compelled Solar to return to the now abandoned Edgewater facility, where he began to start the nuclear fission process that would destroy the world.

Meanwhile, Geoff the Geomancer had discerned from the Earth that Solar was under outside control, placing the planet in grave danger. He contacted Gayle and Phil's psychiatrist friend John Veerhusen, and together they went to try to stop him. Trapped between Darque's control and his love for Gayle, Solar split himself into two beings—one a warrior, and one more passive. The split broke Darque's control, and "Solar the Destroyer" set off to track down the Spider Aliens, while the other Solar stayed behind to try to live a more normal life with Gayle.

After helping to prevent Master Darque from bringing Erica Pierce back into the world by using Doctor Eclipse (see sidebar) as a portal, Solar was forced to use virtual reality technology to aid his "other self", Solar the Destroyer. Searching for signs of the Spider Aliens, the Destroyer had been trapped on a planet in deep space by energy-draining crystals, from the time he landed there to investigate the remains of some Spider Aliens and their spacecraft. As it turned out, the crystals were sentient creatures, whose natural food source had been destroyed by the Spider Aliens. Discerning that the Destroyer's ambient energy levels increased with his anger, the crystals goaded him to strike out, thus supplying them with more energy. Transporting themselves to the planet through the magic of VR, Phil and Gayle were able to calm the Destroyer down to the point where he was able to communicate with the crystals and determine their non-hostile intent.

Out of danger, the Destroyer discovered that his encounter with the crystals had a surprise benefit. They had absorbed the genetic code of some of the aliens, including their memories. Acting like a ruby in a laser, the crystals could transport him to their home planet. Converting himself into pure energy, the Destroyer began the journey to his goal.

DOCTOR ECLIPSE

The story of the necromantic being known as Dr. Eclipse began in April, 1992, with a man named Fred Bender. Bender was an investigator without peer. It seemed there was no problem he could not solve through a little research, and when he grew tired of tracking down insurance frauds and other such mundane matters, he turned his attentions toward the secrets of life itself.

Bender's investigations soon uncovered the existence of both Solar and the former Geomancer Buck McHenry. Bender learned McHenry's whereabouts, and approached him about learning the mysteries of the universe. Buck wasn't interested in talking, so Bender next pursued Phil Seleski—Solar in his human guise. After Bender begged to be shown the Man of the Atom's power, Phil relented and gave him a demonstration. Probing further, Bender finally convinced Solar to show him the physical manifestation of the quantum continuum—the "backstage of reality", as Solar called it. This was a critical error on Solar's part. A similar demonstration in the past had turned Erica Pierce into a being of unspeakable power. History repeated itself, and Bender became capable of manipulating energy like Solar.

Realizing his mistake, Solar tracked down Bender, who was already wreaking havoc with his newfound power. Solar was eventually able to get the best of him because of his greater experience, and somehow removed the power from Bender's body. Furious at what had happened, Solar left the powerless Fred Bender stranded in the middle of Death Valley.

It took Bender days to crawl out of that desert, and the experience drove him insane. Only his burning hate for Solar kept him going. However, his acute powers of observation were still intact. One night in the desert, he observed Master Darque riding a snake through the night sky. He knew that Darque could give him the power for his revenge against Solar, and after finally making his way out of the desert, he sought out Darque in New Orleans.

Seeing Bender as a fool, Darque nonetheless had a use for the man; a use which would give Bender the power he sought. In an arcane ceremony, Darque exchanged every cell in Bender's body with the forces of the Darque Power. Bender dubbed himself Dr. Eclipse, since he now possessed power which eclipsed that of his enemies. Darque had meant for Dr. Eclipse to destroy Solar, and then act as a portal for an otherworldly demon (who in fact was Erica Pierce) to come into this world. These plans were disrupted by the Secret Weapons, but Eclipse lives on to spread his dark evil over the world.

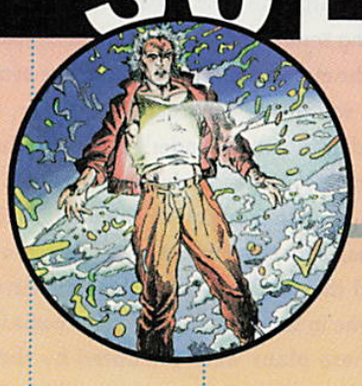
Solar then encountered a new foe who called himself Ravenous. Ravenous had formerly been a scientist named Dr. Raven, who was called to investigate a strange, glowing substance in the Nevada desert. When he and his colleagues subjected the substance to tests back at their lab, it exploded. Dazed, Raven quickly discovered that he had become some sort of parasite, able to drain the lifeforce of others and project bolts of seemingly necromantic energy. He had also been bestowed with some knowledge of what had occurred. The substance was plasma residue from Solar's first battle with Dr. Eclipse. Exposure to it had somehow given Ravenous his powers, which in turn had driven him mad. Solar finally defeated him, and trapped him in a lead-lined containment unit at Edgewater to prevent him from doing any more damage.

The next chain of events in *Solar* will focus on Solar the Destroyer, according to series editor Kevin VanHook. "The Destroyer, with the aid of the crystal creatures that he encountered, is able to travel at near-light speed, and actually arrives pretty close to [the Spider Aliens'] homeworld. He doesn't actually find the homeworld, but there is a massive series of battles out in the depths of space."

In *Solar* #36 and #37, poor Solar will face the double-threat of two of his most powerful enemies. "Dr. Eclipse manages to free himself from something he got into in *Dr. Mirage*, and then he frees Ravenous from his tomb, and they come after Solar," says VanHook. "Eclipse is just completely psychotic, and he is going to push Ravenous farther and farther over the edge, because there is a little bit of him inside Ravenous. So this couple of sick guys comes after Solar, and then we jump headlong into Chaos Effect."

But Solar's true challenge in the future will be what it has always been: his quest to live with the events of his past and the godlike power he has received. Even with the very fabric of reality in his grasp, all he really wants is to be able to live a normal life.

SOLAR TIMELINE



1990
Phil Seleski arrives in this world from another quantum reality.

Sep 1991
The three aspects of Phil Seleski join to form Solar, Man of the Atom, and prevent the accident at Edgewater.

Oct 1991
Erica Pierce, known as "Mothergod", arrives in this reality, coming from the reality Solar destroyed.

Apr 1992
The Erica Pierce of this world kills her husband, and is then killed by "Mothergod". Fred Bender briefly becomes a Man of the Atom.

Jan 1993
Solar splits into two beings, creating "The Destroyer", who sets out on a mission to destroy the Spider Aliens.

Dec 1993
Dr. Raven becomes Ravenous.

June 2062
Gayle chooses to die after being kept alive by Solar all these years (beyond her normal lifespan). Solar is so traumatized he splits into two beings.

Mar 4001
Solar helps repel a second Spider Alien invasion.

CONTEST FUN TRIVIA!

THE ENTIRE VALIANT UNIVERSE AWAITS YOUR GRASP IN THIS ISSUE! EVERY REGULAR-ISSUE VALIANT COMIC CAN BE WON; IT'S UP TO YOU TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE VALIANT UNIVERSE TO RECEIVE BIG, BIG STUFF! IN THE INITIAL CONTEST IN THIS SPECIAL, YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENTIRE VALIANT UNIVERSE IS THE KEY TO VAST REWARDS!

Here's your questions:

1. Who was the mapgiver who showed Aric where to find Shanhara?
2. Which two minions of Master Darque were killed by Gilad, and later reanimated?
3. Who wrote the *Book of the Geomancers*?
4. What Valiant Universe corporation employed Peter Stanchek?
5. What classic TV series do Leeja and Magnus enjoy seeing in the theater?
6. What is the real name, and rank, of Hammerhead [of H.A.R.D. Corps]?
7. Who employs the Eternal Warrior, Bloodshot and Ninjak?
8. Who is Phil [Solar] Seleski's psychiatrist and friend?

entries due by June 30

Please mail each of the six contest entries separately. Thanks!

Name: _____

Age: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your Comic Store's Name: _____

Store Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

CONTEST #1 ANSWERS

1) _____ 5) _____

2) _____ 6) _____

3) _____ 7) _____

4) _____ 8) _____

Grand Prize (One winner)

One Valiant trivia expert will win an entire run of *X-O Manowar* [#0 through #29], with the #0 issue signed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti!

Second Prize (One winner)

One fan will be the winner of a complete run of *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter* [#1 through #12], including the Gold Logo version of issue #1!

Third Prize (Five winners)

Five lucky winners will score a complete run of *Secret Weapons* [#1-11], as well as a copy of *Armorines* #1, signed by series artist Jim Calafiore!

CONTEST RULES

Fill in the blanks pertaining to each question, and place the coupon in an envelope, and mail it to:

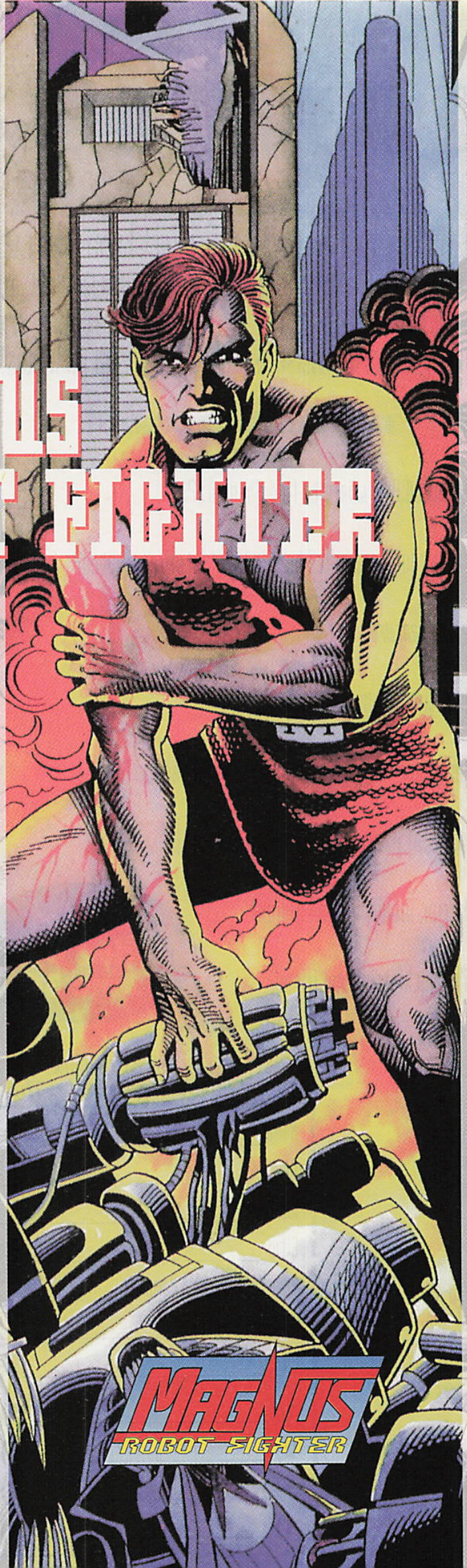
Valiant Contest #1
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and that furry freak Nelson. On the coupon, please print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, the name and address of the store where you purchase comics, and the trivia answers, and place the completed coupon in an envelope. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Valiant Contest #1, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994. The random drawing will be conducted on July 1, 1994, by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after July 4, 1994, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Valiant Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920.

MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER

Life in the 41st century is vastly different than it is today. The continent of North America is covered by a huge city called North Am. This seven million square-mile megalopolis has a population of over 100 billion people. Of course, supporting this huge civilization is a tremendous amount of work, but most of the citizens of North Am lead an idyllic, sedentary (that means they stay home a lot, play Super Nintendo and eat Twinkies) lifestyle. They spend time watching their holovids for news or entertainment, or perhaps travel by aircar or personal anti-gravity belt to a club to play grav-racquetball. Even those who do labor, such as a few scientists and soldiers, consider 30 hours an unbearably harsh work week.



The bulk of the work is done by robots, or robs for short. Pol-robs keep the peace, construction-robs build, repair-robs fix, and myriad other kinds of robs take care of all of the tasks that people once did. Most citizens even have robots for servants. The over 30 billion robots in use in North Am can function independently, but in the absence of direct human supervision, they are controlled by a massive computer complex called Central Rob.

However, the magnificent city of North Am is not quite the utopia it seems to be. Even in this advanced civilization, there is a class system of sorts. North Am has hundreds of numbered physical levels, commonly known as "levs". The wealthiest citizens live in the milespires—huge, miles-high towers—of the upper levels. The poor live on the lower levs, and society's outcasts, known as Gophs, live on the Goph lev. The Gophs don't associate much with the rest of North Am. They fear and despise the citizens of the upper levels, whom they derisively call cloud-cloddies. Most of them have to scavenge for robot scraps or beg to survive.

Even so, the Gophs feel that they are better off than the rest of North Am. The citizens of the upper levels depend heavily on their robots for survival. Some would say too heavily.

The First of the Freewills

The robot 1-A is one of those who believe that mankind depends too much on his kind. Robots do not normally think for themselves, but 1-A became the first freewill

robot, capable of independent thought, after experiencing a power surge while serving as a robot tech officer aboard the cruiser Ottawa in the 37th century. 1-A soon realized that other freewill robots could be a great danger to mankind. Normal robots adhere to the robotic law, which prevents them from harming humans, but freewills are able to defy that law.

1-A built an undersea base, and began to devise ways to fight rogue freewills. 1-A himself became the first robot fighter, creating a powerful combat armor to battle the rogues himself. As the number of freewills created accidentally inevitably began to increase over the years, 1-A found he could not fight the battle alone. He began to seek out humans with special powers to aid him in his struggle. Many such humans were found, but 1-A quickly discovered that their powers made their minds unstable. He created an asylum on Saturn's moon Phobos to care for these failed robot fighters.

Finally, 1-A found a baby human that could be trained and raised to be the ultimate robot fighter.

Magnus's Origin

Magnus is the son of Kris Hathaway and the super-strong Harbinger Torque. As a second-generation Harbinger, great strength and physical toughness is his birthright. He was born during Unity, and sent to the future by Solar under the direction of Geoff the Geomancer, who sensed from the Earth that Magnus was desperately needed in the future.

1-A raised Magnus in his undersea base, training him to the peak of physical perfection and teaching him effective methods to disable robots in hand-to-hand combat. He also implanted a comm-link receptor in Magnus's skull, with which Magnus could intercept transmissions meant for robots.

Armed with his receptor (which he would later remove) and his steel-smashing strength, Magnus was ready to begin his life's work. At the age of 25, he entered North Am and began to destroy the rogue freewills who threatened humanity.

Months later, Magnus and 1-A learned what an awesome challenge they faced. Robot researcher Dr. Teresa Giardino had ascertained that a malfunctioning tech-rob in Central Rob had been causing minute surges in power broadcasts, creating ten million freewill robots over the previous three years.

Magnus had a pretty easy time tackling freewills in the early weeks of his career, and he became North Am's greatest hero for his efforts. However, a few months after he began fighting them, the freewills started to band together—clinging desperately to their newfound awareness. To the shock of those around him, Magnus himself began to wonder if it was truly possible for a robot to be alive. If so, did he have a right to kill them?

In the decisive battle with the freewill forces, Magnus eliminated their rogue leader, but at the same time purposefully damaged North Am's mainbrain, thereby letting the freewills escape. This allowed them to form a steel nation—which they called Synchron—in an uninhabited area of North Am which had been set aside as a wildlife preserve. Magnus was branded a traitor for his actions, but since he had determined that freewills had a right to live, he abandoned North Am for the Goph levs, to live his life away from his unfeeling friends.

This did not stop the citizens of North Am from calling upon him in their times of need. They were very fearful of the Synchrons, and there were human threats to their safety as well. Soon, the Malev invasion dwarfed all of their other concerns.

friends and foes

LEEJA CLANE: As the daughter of influential Senator (and later North Am President) Clane, Leeja grew up accustomed to the finer things in life. She met Magnus shortly after he first appeared in North Am, and quickly became enamored of her city's greatest hero. However, their budding relationship was damaged by what she felt was Magnus' betrayal of North Am during the initial massing of the freewills.

She began to understand Magnus' attitude toward freewills after Synchron's eventual leader Tekla saved her from a group of rogue freewills who were holding her hostage. Leeja stayed in Synchron for a time after that, in an attempt to throw off her decadent upbringing and become tougher and more independent. This proved to be a turning point in her life, for she afterwards followed her father into politics by becoming a North Am councilwoman.

Leeja has always possessed limited telepathic abilities, and since the beginning of the Malev War, she has shown the ability to manipulate ectotheric energy as well. Ectotheric energy is a lifeforce possessed in varing degrees by all humans. The Malevs use it as a source of energy. Thus, this talent has proven quite useful to Leeja as a way to destroy Malevs.

PRESIDENT CLANE: Once one of Magnus's closest friends, the Senator became President in large part because of his close association with Magnus. Unfortunately, the friendship was destroyed by the Synchron crisis. Because of Magnus's refusal to destroy freewills when he had the chance, Clane accused him of treason.

WILLOW TALLTREES: The daughter of North Am Senator Harlan Talltrees, Willow was part of a group of naturalists trying to settle in the Lost Land, when she was abducted by Elzy the Goph (see below). Magnus liberated her from Elzy, and returned with her to the Lost Land. The settlers there wanted Magnus to

help them eradicate the "savages" who were plaguing their camp, but Magnus found that it was his old foe Dr. Noel (see below), and not the savages, who was causing a problem. After returning from the Lost Land, Willow lived with Magnus on the Goph lev for a while, until she grew frustrated by their lack of money. She eventually returned to her father and the lavish lifestyle to which she was accustomed. Willow and her father were killed in the Malev invasion.

TEKLA: The waiter-rob W-23 was one of the 10 million freewills created by a malfunctioning tech-rob in Central Rob. W-23 became part of the freewill uprising, but began to have second thoughts when during an encounter with Magnus, the Robot Fighter did not kill it, even though he had the chance.

W-23 broke into Magnus's apartment to discuss the freewill dilemma with him, and the two soon developed a friendship. They met a few more times, and W-23 developed an affection for Magnus. After being damaged while rescuing Magnus from pol-robs, W-23 changed her form (with the help of Elzy) to look like a robotic version of Leeja. Elzy named her Tekla after her grandmother.

Because of her experience in dealing with humans, and her vision of freewills coexisting peacefully with the citizens of North Am, Tekla became the leader of the Synchrons. Despite her many attempts to start a relationship with Magnus, he continually rejected her. Tekla recently gave her life to save Magnus's true love, Leeja.

ELZY: An outstanding roboticist and businesswoman, Elzy lives and works on the Goph lev. She scavenges the lower levs for junk robot parts, which she salvages and sells. She apparently has several workshops throughout the lower levs. Like all gophs, Elzy has no use for the citizens of the upper levs. Once, after having a run-in with a senator's delinquent son, the boy used his father's influence to have Elzy arrested and sentenced to be psycho-probed. Fortunately, Magnus saved her from that horrible fate.

Elzy apparently does quite well as a scavenger, for she was able to hire Magnus to help her for a time. Like most of the women in his life, Elzy wouldn't mind getting closer to Magnus.

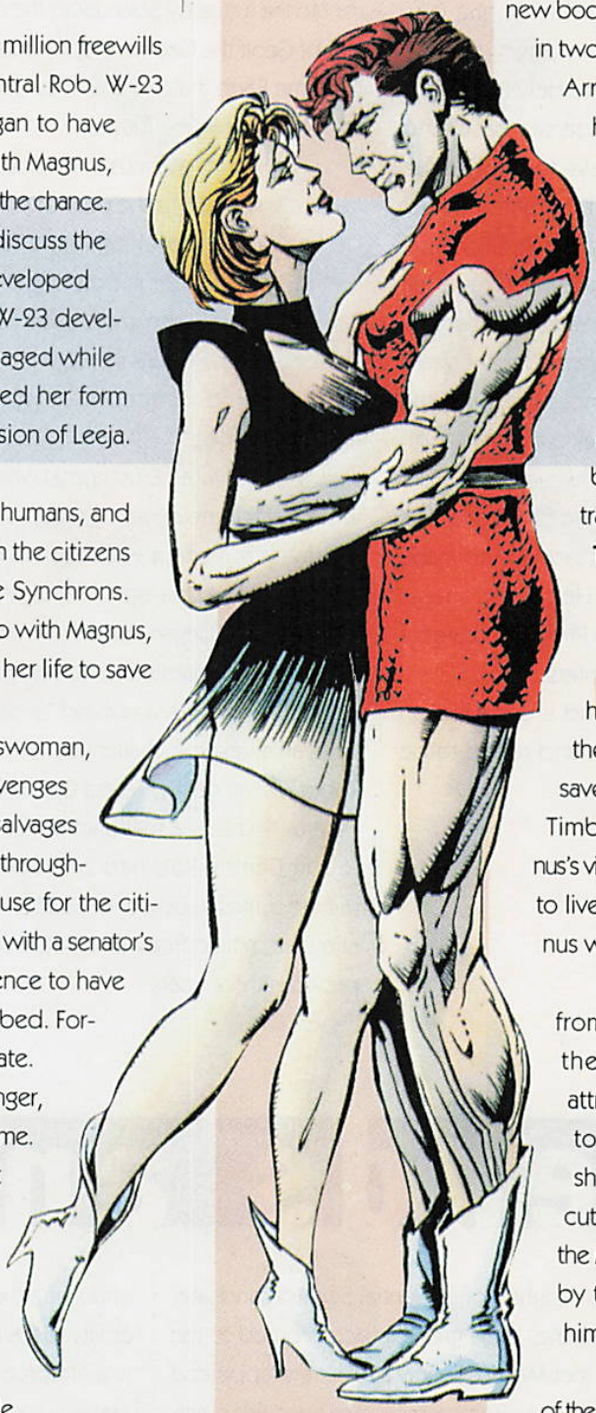
SLAGGER: Superhuman strength and a propensity for big guns (and a insatiable appetite for action) make Slagger the most feared man on the Goph lev. A scavenger and gun-for-hire, Slagger encountered Magnus while Magnus was staying at his girlfriend Felina's house. Needless to say, a skirmish ensued, but Slagger proved to have a sense of humor equal to his great strength, and the two became friends. Slagger was recruited by North Am chief of defense General Mimsy to replace Magnus as their robot fighter, but the job didn't last long, as Slagger rarely did as he was told.

ASA: Although initially presumed destroyed by the Malev Emperor, 1-A managed to escape destruction by leaving Grand One as a virus and reconstituting itself into a new body. This new body comes in two parts. The Aerial Sensor Array unit, Asa for short, houses the former 1-A's intelligence. This unit can interface with the Hard Rob unit, which has a variety of offensive capabilities. The Hard Rob can also be transformed into a sky-cycle configuration, to be used by Magnus for transportation.

TIMBUC: One of the few human defenders of North Am, Timbuc was promoted to Colonel after his quick thinking during the initial freewill uprising saved the North Am Senate. Timbuc did not share Magnus's view that freewills deserved to live, and thus he and Magnus were often at odds.

After Magnus withdrew from North Am to live on the Goph lev, Timbuc's attraction to Leeja led him to try starting a relationship with Leeja, but it was cut short by the invasion of the Malevs (and punctuated by the fact that she found him to be a coward).

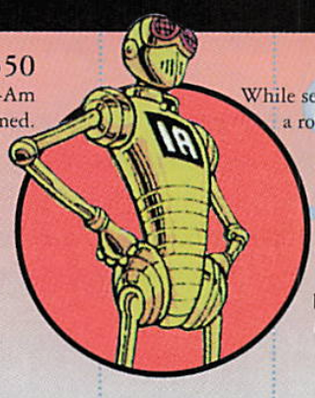
During the initial stages of the Malev war, Timbuc experienced a turning point in his life when he was unable to sac-



It looks like things are looking up for Leeja and Magnus.

MAGNUS

3550 North-Am is formed.



3591 While serving as a robot tech officer aboard the cruiser Ottawa, 1-A becomes freewill.

Apr 3975 Baby Magnus is given to 1-A by Solar to raise and train.

Apr 3999 A group of Predators is defeated on the moon by General Hartwig.

Aug 4001 Magnus begins his career as Robot Fighter in North Am.

Mar 4001 Waiter-rob W-23 is modified by Elzy the Goph to become Tekla. Magnus damages the North Am Mainbrain, allowing rogue freewills to elude captivity. He thereafter decides to become a Goph. Magnus meets an Solar. 1-A and Japan's Grandmother merge circuits to form the entity Grand One.

rifice himself by triggering a bomb that would have prevented the North Am mainbrain from falling into Malev hands. His nerve often failed him in combat thereafter, and he usually proved ineffective in fighting the Malevs. Timbuc redeemed himself when he gave his life defending one of South Am's mainbrains from a Malev attack.

01X: This rob organized the initial freewill rebellion, and was the freewill's first leader. 01X wanted to avoid a costly war between freewills and humans, but his attempts at negotiations were rebuffed by Senator Clane. 01X's hand was forced by the discovery of minute vibrations in freewills which allowed them to be distinguished from ordinary robs. Now no longer able to hide his legions, 01X launched a desperate attempt to take over Central Rob.

He was repelled, but with the help of parts salvaged from the "think-rob" T-1, he was able to control other robs in his immediate vicinity, and ultimately seize the mainbrain itself. Magnus was eventually able to destroy him.

TALPA: Although superficially a mark-one defense rob, Talpa was constructed of indestructible New Metal by North Am's Project Earthcore to help explore the center of the Earth, but he became a rogue freewill. Magnus defeated him initially by trapping him miles under the Earth, but when Erica Pierce moved her San Gabriel settlement into the Lost Land, Talpa was able to break free.

While Magnus was in the Lost Land battling Erica Pierce, Talpa wreaked havoc in North Am. When Magnus returned, he was able to defeat Talpa by subjecting him to extremes of heat and cold, thus weakening his vulnerable joint areas.

XYRKOL: One of Earth's leading scientists, Xyrkol vanished in a space probe in 3992, returning eight years later to seek mastery over the human race. His schemes have included constructing a giant battle-rob to attack North Am, and collaborating with the robot planet Malev-6. His development of a personal transporter and his base hidden in sub-space have made him a formidable opponent. He was eventually captured by Magnus and subjected to a psycho-probe, which removed all criminal inclinations from him, and turned him into a model citizen.

With the perceived threat of the Synchrons, the North Am Senate had Xyrkol de-probed, and struck a bargain with him to create a weapon with which to defeat the Synchrons. Once free, he attacked both North Am and Synchron from his hidden ship in sub-space. Xyrkol was once again captured by Magnus with the help of Leeja, and turned over to the Synchrons for incarceration. Synchron was abandoned at the onset of the Malev War, so Xyrkol may be at large once again.

MEKMAN: Idolizing robots all his life, Mekman created a flexible metal coating which gave him a robot-like appearance. A skilled roboticist, Mekman also created robot doubles of Magnus in his first scheme to control North Am. Repeated psycho-probing finally turned Mekman into a model citizen, and also incapacitated him to a great degree. When the Malevs invaded Earth, he begged to serve them. He was given an insect-like robotic body and a power staff to serve as the Malev Emperor's new vizier. During the last days of the Malev war, Magnus killed Mekman, but not before the maniacal half-man/half-robot maimed Elzy.

DR. NOEL: Like Magnus, Dr. Lazlo Noel felt that North Am had become too dependent on robots. Noel's views were even more extreme, however, in that he felt that society should exist without any robots whatsoever. Kidnapping Leeja and some North Am scientists, he built a huge Space Ark with the intent of creating a new, robotless society on some distant planet.

After this plan failed, Noel found his way into the wilderness of the Lost Land, again intending to create a society without robots. His harsh treatment of other Lost Land inhabitants soon brought him into conflict with Turok, Andar, and Magnus. Having been an ally of Magnus because of his ability to wield ectotheric energy during a previous encounter with Malev-6, Noel naturally fought the current invasion fiercely. Noel was recently killed by Mekman.

THE MALEV EMPEROR: Malev-6 began as an alien probe ship of unknown origin. In the 20th century, it was encountered by Solar near Earth. When Solar investigated, the ship trapped him and seemed to drain away his energy. After finally breaking free, Solar blasted the ship halfway across the galaxy, where it crash-landed on an uninhabited planet.

The sentient ship mined this world, and soon converted the entire planet into itself. It then perfected the use of ectotheric energy, which is created by the thought impulses of living beings. Believed to be destroyed by Magnus and Dr. Noel, the planet's core survived, and eventually made its way to 1-A's undersea base on Earth. It there ambushed the 1-A/Grandmother combination known as Grand One, and tricked Magnus into helping it usurp Grand One's robot body, which it modified into the form that now calls itself the Malev Emperor.

With the help of its Malev underlings, the Malev Emperor intends to transform the Earth into Malev-7. To that end, it has captured North Am's mainbrain, and is attempting to defeat humanity by making the Earth uninhabitable for organic life.

For a look at the future of Magnus, turn to the* RAI AND THE FUTURE FORCE *section.

TIMELINE

May 4001
The rogue freewills construct Synchron, their own city. Soon after, North Am brings its Mainbrain back on-line and attacks the Synchrons. The attack fails, and they have the villain Xyrkol de-probed to create superweapons to defeat the Synchrons.

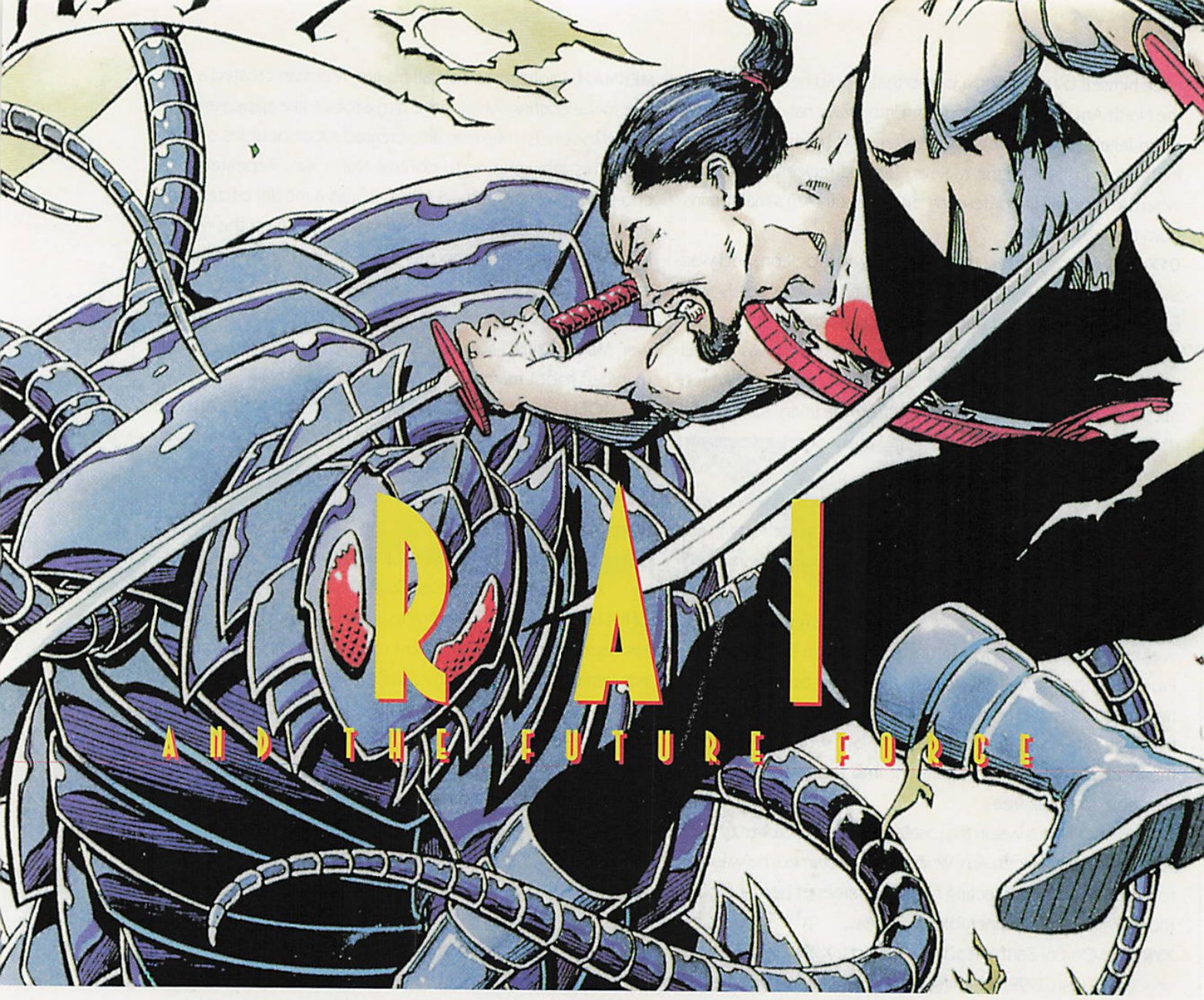
June 4001
Magnus defeats a Predator in North Am. Magnus meets Turok in the Lost Land.

July 4001
Magnus disables Grand One, who was under the influence of the Malev Emperor.

Aug 4001
Magnus enters the Lost Land to take part in Unity. Magnus returns from the Lost Land and destroys Talpa.

Apr 4002
The Malev invasion begins. Willow and Senator Talltrees die in the opening days of the war. The freewills abandon Synchron as the Malevs attack. The Malev Emperor interfaces with the North Am Mainbrain, taking control of all of North Am's non-freewill robots. Magnus joins the Future Force.

Aug 4003
The Malevs are defeated in an all-out assault on the Malev Emperor.



In some ways, Japan's society in the 41st century was similar to that of North Am's. Like North Am, Japan has covered its entire landmass with multiple levels of development to support a population which has ballooned to 50 billion people.

But unlike North Am, there were very few robots in Japan. The entire city was controlled by a central computer which became freewill in 3050. This central computer became known as Grandmother, because of its desire to care for and protect the people of Japan.

After a few years under Grannie's care, some citizens of Japan began to feel oppressed by their lack of control over their own lives. A group called the Anti-Grannies banded together to plot her downfall. To protect herself, Grannie created Rai in the image of the 20th century hero Bloodshot.

The first Rai was infused with some unknown form of energy which gave him great strength and the ability to form mighty weapons. He was also able to travel through the nerveweb of Japan, the computer network which gave Grannie control of the city, thus allowing him to travel anywhere inside Japan at virtually the speed of thought. The line of Rai was passed from father to son through the generations.

By the 40th century, the Anti-Grannie movement had evolved into a group called the Humanists, who were still trying to usurp Grannie's control. These Humanists recruited Magnus—who had recently proven himself to be sympathetic to the cause of humanity gaining control over their lives in North Am—to help them destroy Grandmother. Magnus travelled to Japan, but once he examined the situation first-hand, he advised the Humanists to simply leave Japan if they didn't like Grannie's control.

Frustrated by Magnus's refusal, the Humanists then turned to a seemingly sympathetic Chinasian scientist, who claimed to have developed a device that could kill Grannie. The Humanists used the device, which caused the growth of a tumor-like construct on Grannie's brain. With the help of Magnus and Rai, Grannie and the robot 1-A combined their circuits, thus saving Grannie's life.

Grannie quickly discovered that the device which had caused the tumor was alien in origin. The Spider Aliens which had attempted to invade Earth in the 20th century had returned to try again, and they viewed Grannie as the only real threat to them. Somewhere along the line of her evolvement, Grannie

had developed formidable offensive capablities. The entire construct of Japan was capable of movement and flight, and possessed terrible weaponry. Like a gigantic silver dragon, Grannie rose up to do battle with the aliens.

She was not alone in her conflict. Solar, who had repelled the Spider Aliens in their initial invasion, returned to fight them once again. Together, Solar and Grannie destroyed the alien armada, but the battle was not without cost. In order to engage the aliens in the first place, Grannie was forced to jettison one of her limbs on take-off. With that limb gone, Japan could not safely return to Earth.

So after securing Japan in a safe Earth orbit, Grannie bowed to the Humanist pressure and left the people of Japan to take care of themselves. This gave rise to a new group of radicals, called the Healers, who wished to either replace Grannie or convince her to return. It also left the current Rai without a clear purpose. He was blamed by the Healers for Grannie's departure. After all, he had failed to protect her from the Humanist plot. Of course, the Humanists still viewed him as their hated opponent in the struggle to defeat Grannie. Thus, it sometimes seemed to Rai that all of Japan hated him. This eventually led to his exile.

Power-hungry government Councilor Isao Seko, who sought to gain control of Japan himself, used this situation to his advantage. Seko caused the shuttle on which Rai was leaving for exile to be sabotaged, hoping to strand Rai in space, to prevent him from foiling Seko's plans. However, using the energy of his body, Rai was able to crash-land the shuttle on Earth.

Moments later, Rai was recruited by Rokkie the Geomancer and the Eternal Warrior to aid in the battle in the Lost Land against Erica Pierce. Pierce came to fear Rai because there was something about the energy his body contained that defied her control. She tried to make him abandon the battle by endangering Japan, and his refusal to leave encited her to pull Japan out of orbit, causing it to crash to Earth, killing billions.

Although sorely distraught by this, Rai fought on. He eventually played a critical role in the victory over Erica Pierce by holding off hordes of robots, and even Pierce herself, while the rest of the party freed Solar from captivity. This act of heroism cost him his life.

The New Rai

Japan's engineers were able to obtain enough control over their falling country to enable millions to survive the crash to Earth. Unfortunately, just as the Japanese people were trying to cope with all that they had been through, the Malevs attacked Earth. After securing North Am's mainbrain, the Malev Emperor had seen bruised and battered Japan as easy pickings, and ordered an attack.

But the Malevs soon found that Japan was not without its defenders. Foremost among these is Takao Konishi, the new Rai. This Rai is different from the previous one, as he is not part of the line of Rais created by Grandmother. Takao Konishi derives his power from the Blood of Heroes. This blood was developed at Project Rising Spirit in the 20th century, and first used by Bloodshot. Infused in a human, the nanite-powered blood gives its benefactor enhanced strength, fighting skills (including but not limited to hearing and sight), and healing ability, and can be used to seize control of machines. Because of the legendary abilities that he possessed, Grandmother patterned all of her Rais after the original Bloodshot. In 3216, the second Rai seized the enhanced blood away from the Anti-Grannies to prevent it from being used to control Grandmother. In the intervening years, the blood was hidden away by Grannie to keep it from falling into the wrong hands.

The 41st Century Geomancer Rokland Tate knew that the Earth would once again need a Rai, and in 4002, he led Konishi to the blood, and injected it into him. The nanites in the blood, along with Konishi's Harbinger ability to influence those around him with his own feelings, has made the new Rai a formidable opponent against the Malevs.

He used his Harbinger ability to unite the people of Japan, calling on them to abandon their wrecked country; to go forth and help unite the people of the world to aid in the struggle against the Malevs. The Malev Emperor fears Rai above all others because Rai potentially has the ability to control it, via his ability to "mindlock" other machines.

Because of that fear, the Malevs are constantly trying to kill Rai. Therefore, to aid him in his struggle to destroy the Malev Emperor, Rai has brought together a band of heroes called the Future Force (see sidebar).

The Future of the Future Force

According to *Magnus* and *Rai* writer Tony Bedard, the Malev War will soon come to a heated conclusion. "The Starwatchers [arrived] in February. They are sort of partially featured in *Rai;* you get a nice shot of them on the final page of the book [issue #21]. In the March *Magnus,* you get the first full story in which they are an integral part. In fact, they are the ones who provide the firepower to make the final assault against the Malevs," Bedard remarks, but perhaps the most startling aspect of the Malev War conclusion is the death of Rai. "Rai sacrifices himself in order to bring down the Malevs," he says.

After the conclusion of the Malev War, both *Magnus* and *Rai and the Future Force* will be heading for new directions. "We are going to skip ahead 17 years after

THE FUTURE FORCE

Kazuyo: As a Humanist, Kazuyo originally married the last of Grannie's Rais, Tohru Nakadai, in a Humanist plot to end the Rai line. To her surprise, she came to love him, and bore him a son, Tanaka. However, she held steadfast to her plan, which nearly succeeded because her influence made Tohru very reluctant to become Rai. She and Tohru split after he decided to become Rai, and he took their son to be trained in the way of Rai by Grandmother.

During the Spider Alien plot to disable Grandmother, Kazuyo was able to seize control of a suit of X-O Commando armor being used by a Spider Alien. Using the armor herself, she continued to assist the Humanist cause.

After the fall of Japan, she joined Rai in his efforts to defeat the Malevs. While she is gone, her son is being raised in the same place where Takao Konishi was raised—a temple that was founded centuries earlier by Obadiah Archer.

Spylocke: A Spider Alien agent, Spylocke usually keeps himself hooded, and maintains his distance from Rai and the rest of the Future Force. Rai was the first to learn the truth about this mysterious individual. Plant life is sacred to the Spider Alien race, and Spylocke claims to be helping humanity fight the Malevs simply to save the plant life of Earth. He was at one time involved in a plot to deliver the Blood of Heroes to an African chief known as the Iron Lord, but he apparently double-crossed the Iron Lord when the time came to remove the blood from Rai. Now, he feels that Rai is the Earth's best hope of defeating the Malevs. Spider Aliens crave human blood, but once Rai learned the truth about Spylocke, he made the alien swear not to prey on innocent humans, or their Future Force comrades.

Izaak: One of I-A's failed robot fighters from the asylum on Phobos, Izaak escaped slaughter there by the Malevs to return to Earth with Magnus. When enraged or otherwise unsettled, Izaak turns into an inhumanly strong purple-colored creature who begins destroying any robots in sight. In his human form, Izaak also seems especially capable with machines.

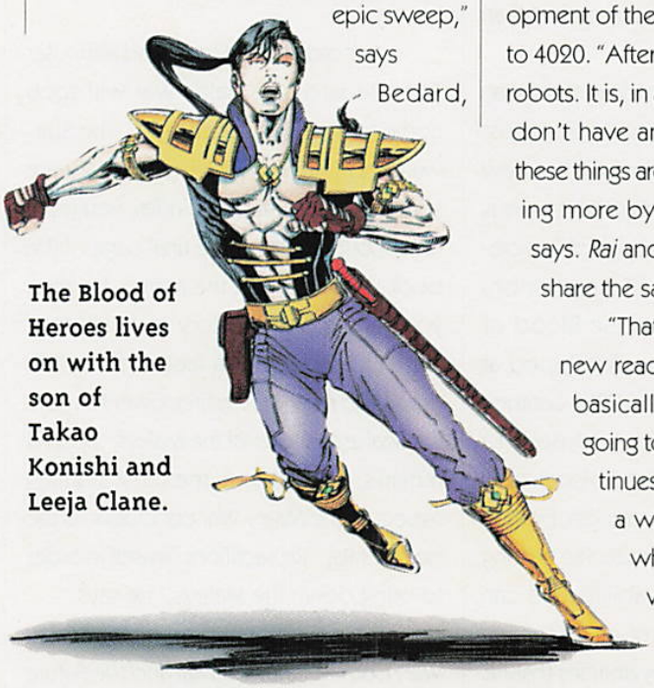
The Eternal Warrior: The Eternal Warrior of the 41st century remembers very little about his past. He has apparently been psycho-probed at least five times in efforts to mend him of his aggressive ways. When Rokland Tate recruited him to take part in Unity, he was working in a fish hatchery in North Am, completely oblivious to the warrior he used to be. With Rokkie's help, Gilad overcame his programming, and now fights against the Malev threat.

Leeja Clane: Although involved with Magnus for years, Leeja has recently developed a relationship with Rai, ostensibly because of their close camaraderie during the Malev War. It is possible, however, that Rai unintentionally influenced her into the relationship with his Harbinger power. Leeja recently gave birth to Rai's child. This situation has caused a rift between Rai and Magnus, and threatened the effectiveness of the Future Force.

Leeja has been a useful addition to the team, due to her telepathic and ectotheric abilities. For a time, she was able to keep tabs on the plans of the Malev Emperor through a telepathic rapport with her psychic mentor M'Ree, who had been captured by the Malevs. Unfortunately, their communication was eventually discovered, and M'Ree was killed.

The rest of the Future Force: In addition to the members listed above, the Future Force consists of Magnus; the current incarnation of Magnus' mentor I-A, who is now known as Asa or I-AB; the Gophs Elzy and Slagger; and former Colonel of North Am Defenses Timbuc, a recent casualty of the struggle. The effectiveness of this fighting team is inextricably linked to Rai, because he can't control his Harbinger ability to influence others. Whenever Rai fails or has doubts, his negative feelings are projected onto the rest of the team.

[the war,] so the April *Magnus* and *Rai* both cover an expanse of time; sort of like *Rai* #0 did, in that it was told in an epic sweep," says Bedard, speaking of the two books that will deal with the aftermath of the Malev invasion and chronicle the recovery and development of the Earth from the years 4003 to 4020. "After the war, they scrap all the robots. It is, in a way, a lot like *Dune*. They don't have any thinking machines. All these things are illegal, and people are living more by their own wits," Bedard says. *Rai* and *Magnus* will continue to share the same storyline.



The Blood of Heroes lives on with the son of Takao Konishi and Leeja Clane.

"That's a really good point for new readers to jump on, because basically after that, everything is going to be starting fresh," he continues. "They are going to set up a whole new government, a whole new society, and the world is going to be a very peaceful, united place. It is going to be really nice, but, of course, we will mess it up after a couple of months. We are going to be introducing the son of Rai and Leeja—he's about 17 years old at that time—and there is also going to be a son of Magnus and Leeja. These two half-brothers are going to be the main characters of *Magnus* and *Rai*. Magnus himself is going to take sort of a back seat. He is going to be more of an elder statesman." But that doesn't mean that Magnus won't see any action. "He is only going to be about 45, so he will still be very vital," Bedard explains.

"Magnus is sort of president of the world. Writing these future books is tricky, because [they are not about] our society. It can be tough to identify with what is going on, especially something that is 2,000 years removed from where you are. One of the challenges is trying to play up some of the human elements that everybody finds commonality in.

"Magnus was raised by 1-A. He has always been sort of at the mercy of somebody else's plan. 1-A raised him to be this champion against the [rogue] freewills, and he had to deal with that. He had to lead humanity against the Malevs. It has always been him living up to someone's expectations. At a certain point, you have to rebel against this program.

"Magnus really wants to be his own man and make things his own way," Bedard continues. "The problem is that once the war is over, he is the natural person to pick up the pieces and lead. Part of his dilemma later on is that he is the reluctant leader, the one everybody rallies around, but he would just as soon be doing what interests him, and not having to burden himself with all this stuff.

"We are going to bring back Leeja's father, who disappeared when the Malevs first came. They rescue him from the Ectotheric pods, or wherever the Malevs stuck him for all this time. He will be sort of the older, wiser voice helping Magnus out with the intricacies of running a government. It is tough for a guy like him, who is used to solving things with his fists.

"On the flip side, since everything is going to be really peaceful and idyllic in this new society, young Magnus is growing up with super strength and is a naturally tough character, but there is nowhere to expend that," Bedard notes. "It is hard for him to vent a lot of that, especially since his father is like, 'I don't want what happened to me to happen to you. I want a better life for you, so why don't you just calm down.' The son is going out, and has all these girlfriends, and is always getting into trouble; just the opposite of the life that Magnus is trying to provide for him."

The future-based Valiant titles will also be receiving a surprising new villain. "Takashi is the son of the Rai from the first series—the original guy with the red dot on his head—the one who got killed by Mothergod in Unity," Bedard explains. "The son of he and Kazuyo (the woman in the X-O commando outfit) is growing up, and seeing that someone else usurped the title of Rai from his dead father. [He believes] he should have been next in line to be the great spirit protector and to wield all these powers. That was denied him.

"Now he is growing up with this guy—young Rai [Leeja and the last Rai's son], who's even got the name. He was next in line for great destiny, and it didn't pan out, so he is very bitter. He is going to wind up being one of the principal villains. In fact, we have plans for him to get Kazuyo's armor and really cause problems.

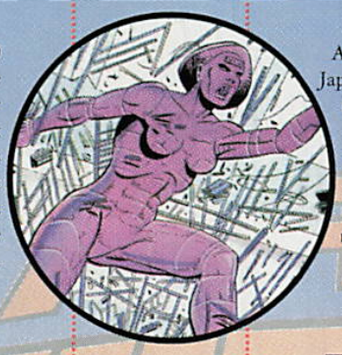
"Part of the whole new world order [comes from the fact] that when the Starwatchers come in, they wield tremendous power. They are the power now in the solar system, and they are sort of like a galactic police force," Bedard explains. "Magnus will finally convince the Starwatchers to simply leave an ambassador on Earth, but if they notice trouble, the Starwatchers will be back in full force to maintain peace on Earth.

"Magnus's problem is that when Takashi starts causing all this trouble, not only does Magnus have to combat that, but he also has to keep it hidden from the Starwatchers," concludes Bedard. "If they find out, then they are coming down and taking over."

RAI TIMELINE

2500 The island of Japan becomes one vast "circuit-board".

2900 The Japanese Electronic Network becomes large enough to encompass the entire island.



Aug 3050 Japan's central computer becomes freewill. Grandmother is born.

May 3216 Sho Sugino, the second Rai, retrieves the Blood of Heroes from the Anti-Grannies, giving it to Grandmother for safekeeping.

Mar 4001 Tohru Nakadai becomes the 42nd Rai. Grandmother rises into space to fight the Spider Aliens. Grandmother and 1-A merge to become Grand One.

Apr 4001 Grand One leaves the people of Japan to decide their own fate.

Aug 4001 Rai and son are exiled from Japan. They crash-land on Earth, and Rai takes part in Unity.

Unity Day 158 Tohru Nakadai dies helping to prevent Unity.

Apr 4002 Takao Konishi is infused with the Blood of Heroes, and becomes the last Rai.

Malevolents invade Earth, and Rai bands the Future Force together to fight the invasion.

THE BEGINNING OF THE VALIANT ER

XO
MANOWAR
CLOTHES THAT MAKE THE MAN

The saga of X-O Manowar begins over 15 centuries ago in Southern Europe, with a man named Aric. A Visigoth, Aric was a barbarian warrior in his people's quest to topple the civilized nation of Rome. Aric also had personal reasons to despise the Romans, as his mother and father had been killed during a Roman raid when he was a young boy. He hated everything Roman so much that when he took a wife, who was from Brittany, he chose to serve her god Lugh, rather than worship the same god the Romans did, which was the custom of his people.

One evening, while he was on patrol, he encountered what he believed to be a horde of demons devouring an encampment of his people. Though he jumped bravely into the fray, they easily defeated him with their superior weapons. These proved to be no demons; they were Spider Aliens—invaders from another planet.

Aric was transported at relativistic speeds to a Spider Alien refueling station on a planet of a nearby star system, where he was used as a slave. After some time, he and a group of other humans were then herded onto a ship to be transported back to Earth. One of these captive humans learned Aric's language. This man had been a prisoner on this ship for several years, and he had memorized its layout (known as "The Map-Giver", he bore an uncanny resemblance to Elvis Presley). Knowing that the aliens were preparing for their invasion of Earth, he used a piece of sharp bone to carve the path to the Alien's ultimate weapon into Aric's palm, and instructed him to pull the ring, which controlled the weapon, from its chest plate.

The Good Skin

Aric fought his way to this ultimate weapon—which appeared to him to be some sort of suit of armor or animal skin—and pulled the ring from its chest plate, as he had been told. The armor immediately enveloped him, and he found that the energy blasts of his alien foes could not penetrate it. Even more amazingly, he learned that the suit—which he called a "good skin"—would respond to his mental commands. He used it to destroy the alien ship he was being held in, and then returned to Earth. He sought to return to his home, but what he did not understand was that while only a few years had passed for him in captivity due to the time dilation effect of travelling at relativistic speeds, centuries had passed on Earth. His home no longer existed as he remembered it. He ended up landing in South America.

That might have been the end of Aric's adventure with the good skin. He discarded it, and found shelter in a small village near where he had landed. Although these were not his people, he became content to live among them for a time.

But for some reason, when Aric discarded the armor, he did not discard the ring. The ring was the key to controlling the armor, which was the most advanced weapon the Spider Aliens could produce. The aliens, who wanted their weapon back, seized the armor which Aric had so casually tossed aside, but it was useless to them without the control ring. One day, while Aric was gone, they ransacked his village while searching for him. When he returned, he found a message the aliens had left, which proved to be their undoing. They demanded that he leave the ring for them there, and walk away.

This told Aric that they feared his possession of the ring, and also informed him of the connection between the ring and the armor. After enduring multiple attacks from groups of the aliens, Aric called the armor and it came to him. Once again, the armor was used as a weapon against its creators, as Aric used it to slaughter his tormentors (which he referred to as the "Hard-Skins").

Rising to Power

Aric's quest to be free of his alien foes ultimately brought him into contact with Ken Clarkson, who had been vacationing in Peru. Ken worked for Orb Industries, a multinational conglomerate which the aliens were using as a base of operations and cover for their invasion activities. Ken knew what his bosses were, and he recognized the X-O ring when he saw it on Aric's finger. For his part, Aric—still unable to understand English—thought that Ken was a wizard who wanted to aid him.

Ken soon betrayed Aric to his alien bosses, but when the time for the planned alien ambush came, Ken couldn't go through with it. He warned Aric just in time, and the two were able to escape the ambush—although Ken lost his arm in the process. In the ensuing struggle between the Spider Aliens in charge of Orb and Aric, he and Ken were able to take over Orb. Since the aliens had kept their ownership of the company a secret, no one really knew who owned it anyway.

Ken and Aric's activities did attract the attention of Toyo Harada, however. Recognizing the X-O armor to be of alien origin, Harada employed the services of the mercenary Sniper, who had guns surgically implanted in his arms, to stop Aric. Sniper failed, and in Aric's subsequent confrontation with Harada, his barbarian upbringing served him in good stead. He and Harada learned a respect for each other, and promised not to interfere in each other's affairs. Aric proved his strength to Harada when he repelled an attack on Harada by Sting and his band of rogue Harbingers.

Thus far, Aric's activities had been directed largely by Ken, whom he trusted as his friend. Aric himself had little use for the modern world he found himself in. All he knew was that he wanted to kill the Spider Aliens for what they had put him through, and that he wanted to go home. Gradually, the X-O armor helped Aric gain an understanding of English, and much more. Just as Ken was contemplating killing Aric, having no use for him after he had taken over Orb, the good skin warned Aric of Ken's previous treachery. Aric wanted to kill him, but he realized he needed a guide in this new world, and Ken was the only person he knew. Aric replaced the arm that Ken had

previously lost with an artificial limb generated by the X-O armor. If Ken attempted to betray Aric again, he would be killed by his own hand!

Return to Barbarism

Shortly after Aric began using his barbarian ways to manage Orb, he was approached by Geoff the Geomancer, and transported to the Lost Land to aid in the Unity conflict. Instead of joining in battle with Solar, Magnus, and the others, Aric preferred to fight the battle in his own way. From the various primitive tribes that had wandered into the Lost Land, Aric carved out an empire with which to fight Mothergod.

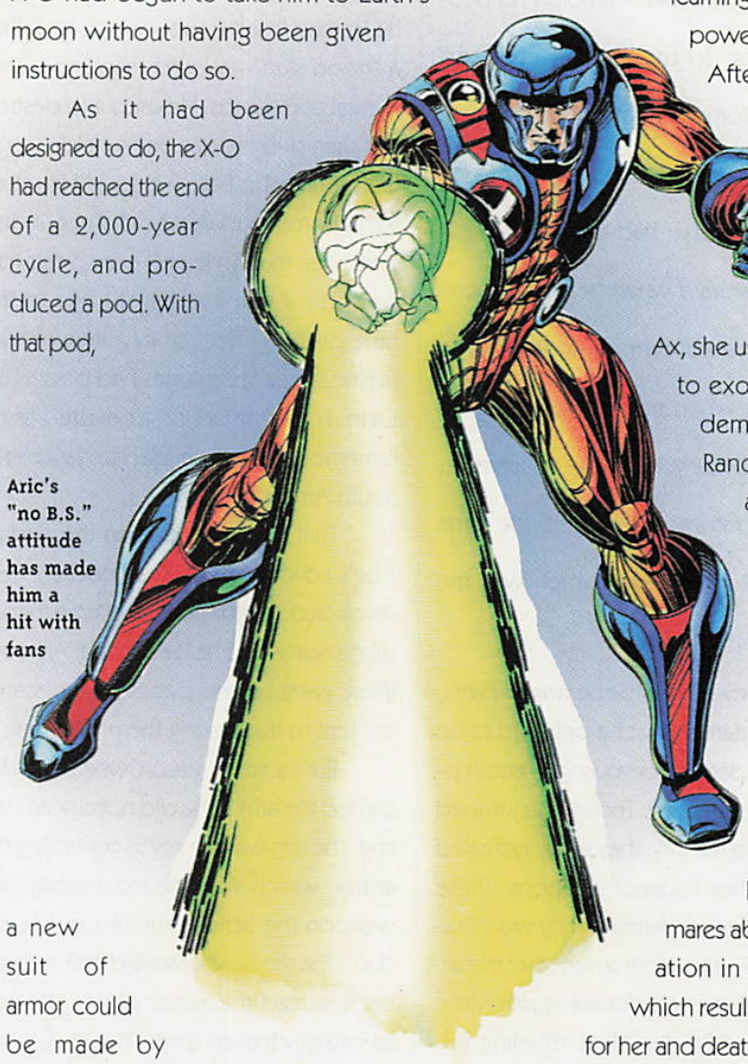
Seeing Aric as a serious threat, Mothergod soon tried to make peace with him. She threw a festival in his honor, giving him his choice of lovely maidens as a peace offering. But the peace offering turned out to be treachery. As soon as Aric took off his X-O armor and started to relax, Mothergod spirited it away using her energy-manipulation abilities. One of her Tyrannosaurus Rex bionisaurs then moved in and nearly bit Aric in half!

Lying on the ground near death, Aric kept his wits about him and summoned the armor. The X-O broke free of Mothergod's control and enveloped Aric, saving him from certain death. But this attack cost Aric dearly. The armor told him it would be 10 years before he would be fully recovered. In the meantime, he would have to wear the armor constantly.

Aric sought to gain revenge on Mothergod for this, but before he could, the others had won victory against her. As Solar used his powers to send everyone back to their proper times, Aric was sent back to the fifth century world that he was born in. He tried to pick his life up where he had left off, but the armor simply made him too different. After his lovely wife Deidre had been killed because of his own people's fear of him, the armor instructed him to bury himself and the armor, and both man and weapon were put in suspended animation until a time shortly after he left for the Lost Land in the 20th century.

After awaking back in the present, Aric, whose body had healed by this time, found himself the target of renewed attacks by the Spider Aliens. Furthermore, the X-O itself seemed to be acting strangely. One night while he slept, the X-O had begun to take him to Earth's moon without having been given instructions to do so.

As it had been designed to do, the X-O had reached the end of a 2,000-year cycle, and produced a pod. With that pod, a new suit of armor could be made by merging it with a living being. Aric's X-O—which was named Shanhara, as he learned during this ordeal—was taking him to a Spider Alien base on the dark side of the moon to complete this process. Coincidentally, Solar had recently learned about this same base from Toyo Harada. Solar and Aric destroyed the base and the Spider Aliens in it, and then destroyed the X-O pod before it could fall into alien or evil hands.



Aric's "no B.S." attitude has made him a hit with fans

After killing a group of bionisaurs in the New York sewers with the help of Turok, and enduring an attempt by the U.S. government to seize both his armor and Orb Industries, Aric began to grow weary of his responsibilities in the civilized world. Entrusting Shanhara to his security chief Randy Cartier, Aric left New York for the deep jungles of Peru in South America.

X-O, She-Devil of War

While Aric defended a tribe of Yanomama Indians from the threat of a logging company that wanted to push them off their land, Randy was learning to enjoy the power of the X-O. After defending herself from an attack by the rogue Harbinger Ax, she used Shanhara to exorcise an old demon. It seems Randy had been an agent of the Canadian secret service before coming to work for Orb, and she continued to have nightmares about an operation in Afghanistan which resulted in torture for her and death for her husband. Using Shanhara, she flew to Afghanistan, to the military camp where the incident had occurred. She razed the camp, but afterwards learned that friendly forces had taken control of the camp after she had been rescued. The power of the armor had made her arrogant and reckless.

A few days later, Aric returned from Peru and took his armor back, much to Randy's relief. Unfortunately, his return to civilization also meant the return of his responsibilities and problems of wearing the armor. After a misunderstanding with the Armorines, Aric has uncovered what may be the Spider Aliens' most insidious plot yet!

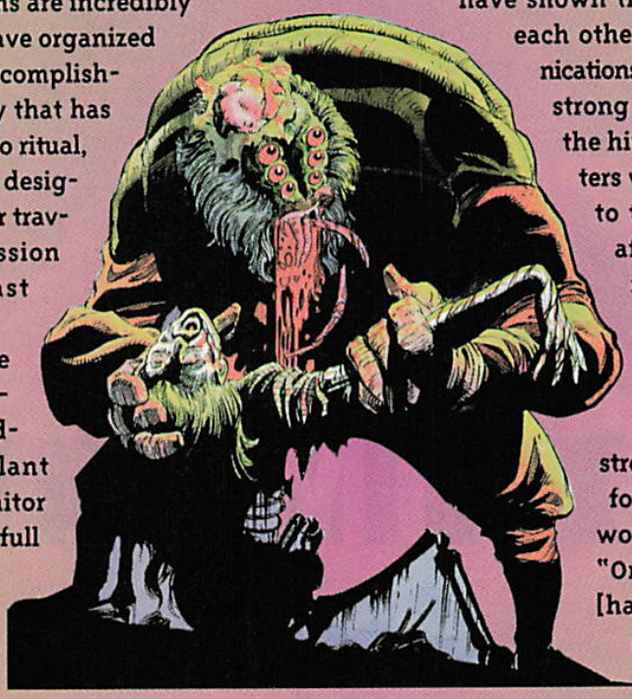
X-O Manowar writer Jorge González reveals that the rumors readers have been hearing are true. Shanhara is going to die. "We will find out in issue #28 that the

THE SPIDER ALIENS

The Spider Aliens are one of the most tenacious menaces in the Valiant Universe, and certainly the longest-lived. Their race is much older and more technologically advanced than ours. At least 10,000 years ago, they had already developed technology sufficiently advanced to produce X-O Manowar class armor.

The Manowar class is the type worn by Aric Dacia, and is the most powerful class of armored suit the Spider Aliens are capable of producing. The armor was the product of thousands of years of development by Spider Alien bio-engineers. The X-O Manowar, along with the lesser X-O Commando and Wolf class armors, were apparently developed to aid the Spider Aliens in their holy mission.

That holy mission is the elimination of all life forms except plants. The Spider Aliens are incredibly zealous in this mission, and have organized their civilization around its accomplishment. Theirs is a pious society that has reduced much of its existence to ritual, conducted by leaders who are designated First Among Equals. Their travels in carrying out their mission have taken them across vast expanses of space.



Although zealous, they are also very cautious in the execution of their mission of ridding the universe of non-plant lifeforms. They carefully monitor their prey in preparation for a full invasion, which may not take place until centuries after initial contact. The most likely explanation for the huge delay involved in the invasion process is the time needed to travel interstellar distances. It may be that they initially land in a star system with a relatively small force, and after discovering prey, signal the main invasion fleet. This fleet may have to travel hundreds of light years from their home planet or some other base to reach their destination, taking centuries to do so. Invasion fleets have been known to consist of 600,000 to one million interstellar vessels, each containing up to 300 Spider Aliens.

It is known that the Spider Aliens were abducting human subjects as early as the year 408, and there is evidence that they were doing so even earlier. While they worship plants, the Spider Aliens feed on blood. When no other food is available, the Aliens have been known to turn to cannibalism.

In addition to abducting humans, the Spider Aliens infiltrated human society. One Spider Alien's thirst for human blood inspired the legend of vampires in Transylvania in the 1400's. In more recent times, a group of aliens took control of Orb Industries to use as a base of operations on Earth. To blend in with humans, the Spider Aliens have the capacity to bio-engineer members of their race to appear more human-like. In addition to the human-like aliens, there is a more alien-looking bipedal type, a warrior-class bipedal type, and a type with eight legs which looks very spider-like. There are also "mother" spiders, whose job it is to propagate the race. It is possible that there are other types that are bio-engineered for various other purposes.

It has been suggested by Solar that the Spider Aliens share a "hive mind", meaning that each individual alien is a part of and in contact with the minds of the entire race, combined to form a vast, overall sentience. However, this may only be partially true, since the aliens have shown the need to communicate with each other verbally and to use communications devices. It may be that only very strong impressions have an impact on the hive mind, such as their encounters with Solar. Solar became known to them as "Solar the Destroyer" after he demolished most of an invasion fleet in 1991. He apparently has similar abilities to those of their gods, which heightens their fear of him.

Although Solar the Destroyer has been a fearsome enemy for the aliens, they may fare even worse against the Starwatchers. "One of the things I want to do [happens] when the Starwatchers go up against the Spider Aliens," says *Starwatchers* writer Tony Bedard. "They can't kill the Spider Aliens, because of their programming [against killing], but the Spider Aliens are these reprehensible blood-sucking creatures, so what they might do is introduce a certain type of nanite in their body that would read their cell structure. If you put a nanite into a Spider Alien, and it had a configuration in its memory for something that is herbivorous, that feeds on plants rather than animals, then the thing would reconstruct their innards so they couldn't suck blood anymore."

Of course, this would cause quite a problem for the Spider Aliens, since they worship plant life. "There are incredible moral quandaries that we can really explore with this," Bedard explains. "The Starwatchers want to convert the Spider Aliens from evil blood-sucking folks into peaceful plant-sucking folks, and what you wind up with is they completely bastardize these poor aliens, and make them into something that is the most hateful thing you can imagine. Later on, we might have the invasion of the killer vegetarian Spider Aliens."

Spider Aliens have been poisoning the water supply to Aric's town for the past year and a half or so. So he has been poisoning the armor with a silicone virus which is not harmful to humans, so it doesn't affect Aric at all, [but it does affect the armor]. It has gotten to the point that the armor is vulnerable, and the aliens make their move."

The destruction of Shanhara is part of a bigger Spider Alien scheme. "Because of things that are happening in *Armorines*, we will find out that the Spider Aliens have been gathering for something, which we will discover in *Armorines* #5 or 6," says González. The result will be an epic space battle that will crossover from *Armorines* to *X-O Manowar*.

But as was chronicled in *Rai* #0, Aric has a suit of Manowar armor in the future. So where does the new armor come from? Recent reports have claimed that the new armor is that worn by the alien whom Solar defeated in *Solar* #7, but González dispels this rumor. "It is not that one, but it has something to do with that," González says, revealing only that the answer to this riddle will be divulged in *X-O Manowar* #30, an issue that will include many other landmark events. "All will be revealed, and a supporting character will die. Randy will be taking off for a while—on a sabbatical to Canada. This summer, we'll reveal that there was an original owner of Orb—before the Spider Aliens took over. Now that the Spider Aliens are out of the picture, he wants the company back."

That will be just the beginning of what is shaping up to be a year of major changes in the *X-O Manowar* title. "Ken's arm is being regenerated under his prosthetic arm. So once his arm is completely healed, Ken will be completely out of Aric's control. He really doesn't have to listen to Aric if he doesn't want to," says González.

"I want to do something where Ken will have to decide where his allegiance is, without being forced. Aric will be going back to South America to hunt down the men that killed all the Yanomama people while he was down there. That situation will be resolved. Lauren, the stripper girl from issue #5, will be coming back to Aric's life. She is a lawyer now. That should cause some interesting problems, since the relationship between Aric and Randy will have been heating up by that point."

Part of the strength of the *X-O Manowar* title has always been the continued evolution of Aric from barbarian to 90's guy, and the related experiences of the other supporting characters, as well. That will be true more than ever with the events of the coming year. ☆

X-O TIMELINE

approx. 8000 B.C.
Shanhara is created from a seed.

385
Aric is born in Dacia, an ancient kingdom in Southern Europe.

408
Aric is kidnapped by Spider Aliens.

Mar 1991
Aric finds the good skin and escapes from the Spider Aliens.

Sep 1992
X-O and Solar destroy the Spider Alien base on the moon.

2062
Aric's X-O armor is sent off into space to keep it out of Harada's hands. Aric is killed by Harada.

KNOW YOUR PANELS!

THE ENTIRE VALIANT UNIVERSE AWAITS YOUR GRASP IN THIS ISSUE. EVERY REGULAR-ISSUE VALIANT COMIC CAN BE WON; IT'S UP TO YOU TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE VALIANT UNIVERSE TO RECEIVE BIG, BIG STUFF! IN THE SECOND CONTEST IN THIS SPECIAL, YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF PAST VALIANT INTERIOR ART WILL LEAD YOU DOWN THE PATH TO VALUABLE PRIZES!

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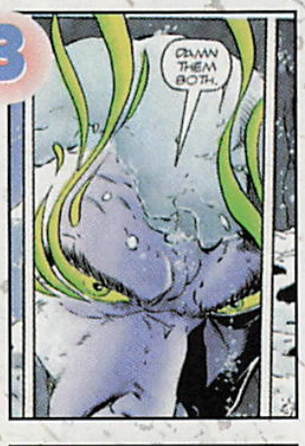

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WHAT YA GOTTA DO: IDENTIFY THE SIX PANELS SHOWN IN THE SIX BOXES BY: TITLE, ISSUE NUMBER, AND ARTIST (PENCILLER ONLY). THESE ARE TOUGH, BUT WE'RE CONFIDENT THAT YOU CAN DO IT!

entries due by June 30

Grand Prize (One winner)

One fan will win an entire run of *Solar, Man of The Atom* [#1 through #34], including both printings of legendary *Solar* #10! These are some of the most difficult Valiant back issues to find, and they'll be all yours!

Second Prize (One winner)

One fan will be the winner of a complete run of *Archer & Armstrong* [#0 through #23], including the origin #0 issue!

Third Prize (Five winners)

Five lucky winners will receive a set of *Ninjak* [#1 through #5], with the #1 issue signed by series artist Joe "The Elvis Presley of Comics" Quesada!

Name: _____

Age: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your Comic Store's Name: _____

Store Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

A N S W E R S

1) _____ 4) _____

2) _____ 5) _____

3) _____ 6) _____

Contest Rules

Fill in the blanks pertaining to each panel (with title, issue number and penciller, place the coupon in an envelope, and mail it to:

Valiant Contest #2
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and Paul Fairchild. On the coupon please print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, the name and address of the store where you purchase comics, and the panel information, and place the completed coupon in an envelope. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Valiant Contest #2, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994. The random drawing will be conducted on July 1, 1994, by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after July 4, 1994, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Valiant Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920.

Man Out of Time
TUROK

About 150 years ago, Turok and his young companion Andar travelled far from their home with the Kiowa tribe in the Dakota territories, in search of game and adventure. They entered the place that has since become known as the Lost Land—an area that exists outside of normal time and space. Other humans had also found their way into this vast valley, and so had various creatures. Great dinosaurs from the past existed side by side—none too peacefully—with humans.

Turok and Andar spent years trying to find their way out of the Lost Land, but their efforts were soon curtailed by the arrival of humans from the future. First, a group of naturalists from the 41st century led by Dr. Lazlo Noel found an entrance into the Lost Land, and built a settlement there. These people claimed that they wanted to start a new life for themselves away from civilization and the robots on which their home, North Am, had become so dependent. Unfortunately, there was apparently no room in their new society for the rest of the inhabitants of the Lost Land, and they and a group of warriors led by Turok soon began to war.

Magnus was soon brought to the Lost Land by Willow Talltrees to help the North Am settlement, but when he saw what was happening, he decided to side with Turok instead. With Magnus's help, Turok and Andar repelled Lazlo and the North Am invaders.

But the next invasion from the future was not quelled so easily. Erica Pierce, who had been waiting for centuries for the right time to launch her plan for Unity, moved her entire base of operations from North Am to the Lost Land. Pierce saw that if she could control Turok, then many of the tribes there would follow his lead. She spoke to them of bringing harmony to all existence, molding eternity under her benevolent control. For his part, Turok viewed Pierce as a god, and naturally, swore allegiance to her. Only fools and white men deny the wisdom of gods, he thought. Thus, he felt he had no choice but to obey her.

Turok soon learned that divinity can be hollow. One day, Pierce ordered him to hunt and kill Obadiah Archer, who had recently escaped her captivity. However, once he had tracked down Archer and his partner Armstrong, he found them to be noble warriors. As he wondered why a god would command the death of such a fine individual as Archer, Archer pointed out the evil being done in Pierce's name. Turok realized that no being or thing holy would sanction those acts, and renounced his allegiance to Pierce. He and the warriors who followed him began fighting side by side with the heroes who had been gathered to stop Unity.

During the Unity conflict, Turok had lost track of his companion Andar, so in the closing days of the battle, Turok began to look for him. While he was gone, a group of Pierce's bionically enhanced raptosaurs—called bionisaurs—slaughtered all the people in his camp. Vowing his revenge on these intelligent and vicious creatures, Turok began hunting them down. He had the group's leader, the evil Mon-Ark, under his knife when all hell seemed to break loose.

That hell was caused by a black hole. Solar had been sending all of the participants of Unity back to their appropriate times and places, but before he got to Turok and the rest of the "natives" of the Lost Land, the Land began to collapse in upon itself. This occurrence tossed Turok and his hated foes, the bionisaurs, into a South American jungle in 1987.

After all that he had been through, Turok adjusted to his new situation easily. Using the powerful bows and arrows that he had been given by the Mothergod, he took up the quest he had begun in the Lost Land—the death of all dinosaurs (and bionisaurs)!

A Man Out of Time

Turok was taken in by the peaceful people of a small village in the Columbian jungle. These people were farmers, not hunters, but Turok quickly learned to enjoy the tranquility there. His serene lifestyle was shattered by the arrival of the bionisaurs. Their leader Mon-Ark was eager to renew his rivalry with Turok, and antagonized his foe by attacking the villagers. Although Turok repelled the bionisaur attack, the victory was Mon-Ark's, for Turok was forced to leave his adopted people to save them from the wrath of the bionisaurs. Once again, Turok was compelled to wander the world as a hunter.

He quickly earned a reputation as a dinosaur hunter in the jungles of Columbia, and attracted the attention of a drug lord named Carlos Comacho. Comacho's "business" was being interrupted by the dinosaurs—his men were being slaughtered by the beasts, and even his hired soldiers could do nothing to stop them. Tracking down the now-legendary dinosaur hunter, he eagerly supplied Turok with guns and other weapons to help him eliminate the beasts. As Turok was testing those weapons, he was surprised by a bionisaur attack. He adapted to the 20th century's weapons well, however, and repelled the group attacking him—killing Mon-Ark's beloved mate in the process.

This was just the beginning of his task. Word reached Turok that the dinosaurs had started breeding in the area. Joined by Comacho's men and paleontologist Maria Cortez, Turok led an assault on the island off the Columbian coast where the bionisaurs had nested. The invasion force found the bionisaurs ready for them, with Mon-Ark enraged and more vicious than ever after the death of his mate. In an epic battle, Turok slew his enemy Mon-Ark using the last of the Mothergod's electronic arrows, which he had brought with him from the Lost Land.

But some of the other bionisaurs escaped; Turok's job was far from over. He continued to kill dinosaurs in Columbia, sometimes trading severed dinosaur heads with the locals. These heads brought a high price on the black market, as stuffed and mounted trophies. Unfortunately, some men were also using the heads to distribute the genetic material of the dinosaurs to

labs all over the world, including a lab owned by Orb Industries in Florida.

The Orb subsidiary Bio-Atlantic Laboratories was soon able to clone living dinosaurs from this genetic material. When Orb owner Aric (X-O Manowar) Dacia learned of this, he was furious. He had fought dinosaurs in the Lost Land during Unity, and he knew the danger of unleashing dinosaurs in modern civilization.

Aric's investigations soon led him to Turok in Columbia, and he and Turok put an end to the black market distribution of dinosaurs there. Returning to New York, the pair from the past discovered that there were bionisaurs in the sewers there. After the men disposed of them, Turok left New York to find what had become of his people and try to adjust to his new civilization.

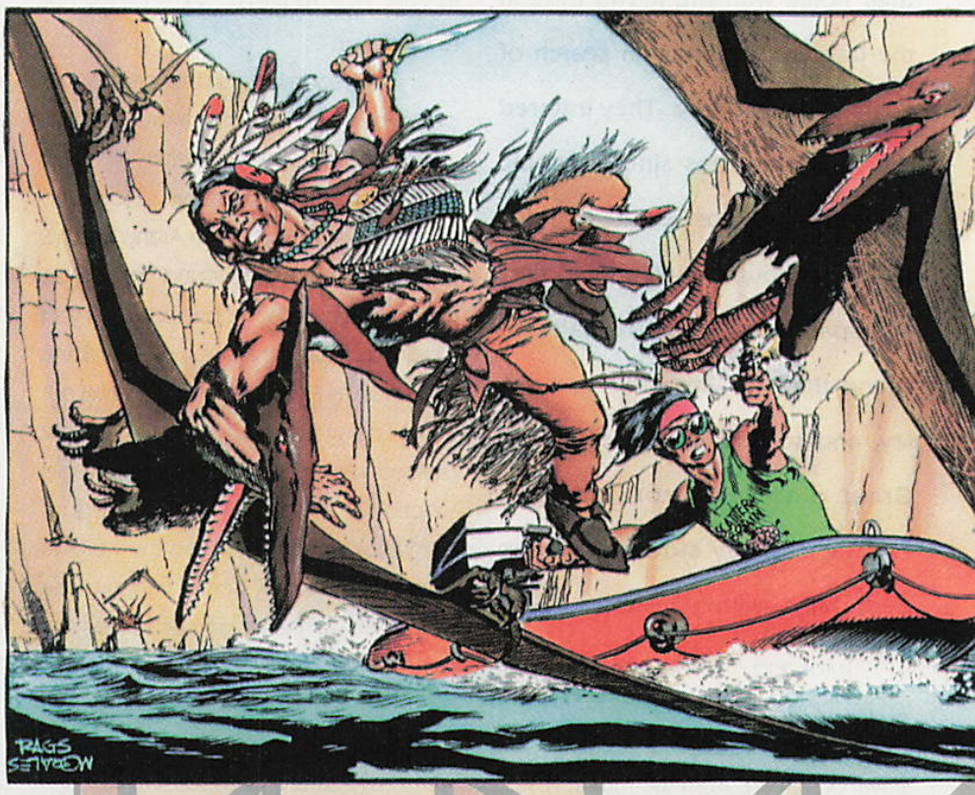
With the help of cultural anthropologist Dr. Regan Howell, Turok was able to find a group of his Kiowa tribesmen at the Tanoan Flats Reservation. He was also reunited with his old pupil, Andar. Apparently, Andar had been thrown from the Lost Land to a time around 1910. He found himself among his Kiowa tribesmen, who were much older than they were when he and Turok had left on the journey that took them to the Lost Land. Andar then lived through wars with the white man, and was ultimately rounded up and put on a reservation. An old and ailing man now, Andar asked Turok to teach his grandson Andy, just as Turok had taught Andar in the olden days. Andy was reckless and headstrong, but Andar was sure that he would be straightened out by learning the old ways. Turok made his promise, and Andar died that evening a happy man.

Turok's experience with the dinosaurs caused him to be in great demand, as dinosaurs had begun to appear with alarming frequency all over the world. While reluctantly investigating a dinosaur attack for the FBI, Turok himself was hunted and captured. A collector of rare and exotic species named Dr. Noel (clearly an ancestor of the 41st century's robot-hating Dr. Noel) had hired a formidable hunter named Israel Crockett, the Longhunter, to add Turok to his collection. Using Allosauruses from Noel's collection, the Longhunter had baited a trap for the dinosaur hunter. Turok and crew were taken to Noel's secluded complex, and put in cages alongside the rest of his rare and exotic pets. After Turok defeated the Longhunter in personal combat, he, Dr. Howell, and Andy managed to escape captivity—leaving Noel to be eaten by his dinosaur pets.

On the trail of a missing girl in West Virginia, Turok and crew found more than just dinosaurs. He found that Chichak and his clan of the Spider People (no known relation to the Spider Aliens), whom Turok had first known in the Lost Land, had kidnapped the child. Chichak and his people had been thrown to the 20th century just as Turok had, but they ended up in New River Gorge, West Virginia. Much of the other wildlife of the Lost Land had made the time-trip as well, including dinosaurs of all species. The Spider clan thought that the new land they had come to was heaven, for in this land they had animals to hunt, camps to raid, and with the arrival of Turok, enemies to slay.

Chichak and his clan had come to be Turok's enemies while Turok served Mothergod in the Lost Land, and Chichak was eager to renew their rivalry in this new land. Kidnapping Regan Howell—whom Turok had grown to be quite fond of—the clan led Turok and Andy on a wild chase through the dinosaur-infested gorge. Finally tracking them down with the help of a member of the clan who had been left behind as a sacrifice to "He Who Slays", a mighty Tyrannosaurus Rex who stalks the gorge, Turok and crew conquered the clan with their superior weaponry. In a bold move, Chichak challenged Turok to unarmed combat, but this final battle was interrupted by the arrival of the local police. It seems that the governor of West Virginia had stepped in to take credit for the return of the missing child—and he also declared the gorge a "State Game and Dinosaur Preserve." The modern world had begun to accept and adjust to these invaders from the past.

After that adventure, Turok was ready for a break from fighting dinosaurs, but he was not about to get one. Visiting Andy's uncle Bile in Utah, Turok encountered another dealer in rare and exotic animals. Bile operated a wildlife rehabilitation project, which included a rare white buffalo. The beast was stolen



Turok is passing his skills and wisdom on to young Andy.

by a Chinese crimelord named Chun Lee Fat, who had a rich client who believed the beast's horn would restore his virility. To aid him in his endeavors, the crimelord employed one of the rarest beasts of all—a bionisaur, which he used as an enforcer dragon. Turok tracked Chun Lee Fat to his headquarters in Los Angeles, and battled the bionisaur.

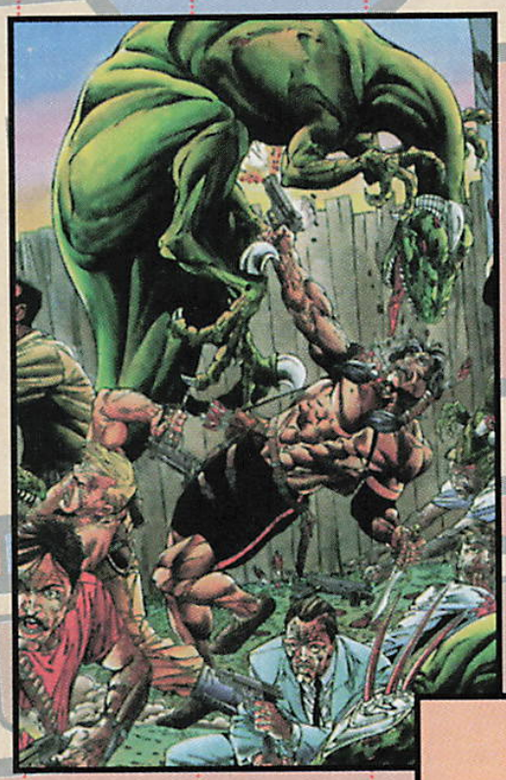
"The next storyline deals with the whole concept which will be revealed in the *Secrets of the Valiant Universe* book," says writer Kevin VanHook. "There is someone who is actually pulled through the time stream by Turok—it is more or less a pirate story. Turok is dealing with a legitimate pirate in the 20th century. Just because [dinosaur hunter] is in his name doesn't mean he has to fight them every month. It adds another dimension to the character."

But that doesn't mean that Turok is going to run out of dinosaurs. More have been appearing just as fast as he's been killing them. "They are breeding," says VanHook. "If you think about it, they came through in 1987, the same time he did. The first group was the bionisaurs that actually came through, but their children were not electronically retrofitted, outside of those that were set up in Central Park in the X-O Manowar stories. These are all just naturally born, non-intelligent beasts, for the most part. I think that there are a lot of them out there, and it would be tough for them to [become extinct.]"

So Turok's quest will not be ending anytime soon. While he has recently succeeded in completing his decades-long task of returning from the Lost Land to his people, and of finding his lost companion Andar, it seems that Turok may never know the peace he knew before stumbling into the Lost Land 150 years ago. Instead of leaving his troubles behind him when he left the Lost Land, he has brought them with him to his new home in the 20th century. ☆

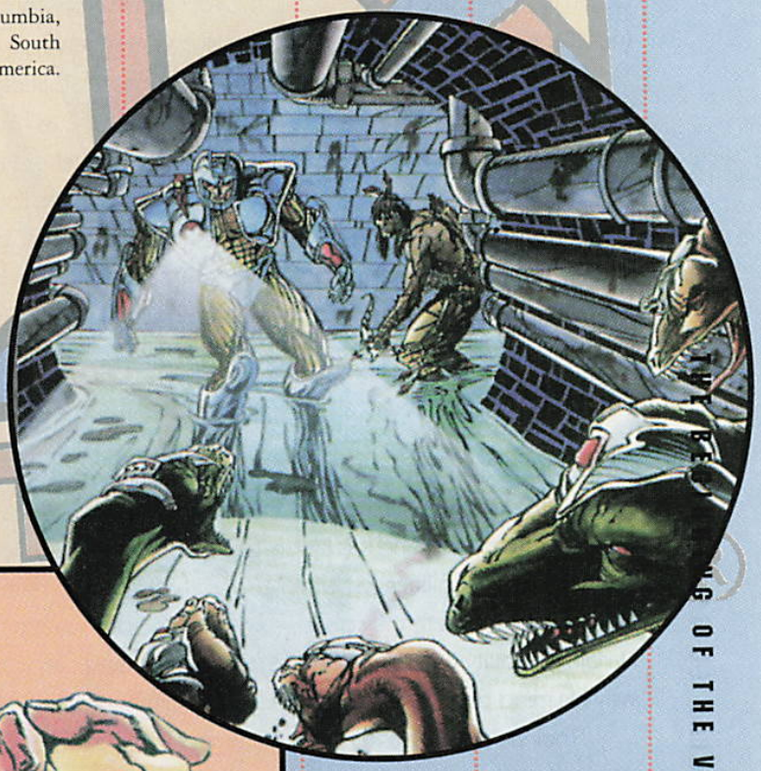
TUROK TIMELINE

1854
Turok and Andar first enter the Lost Land.



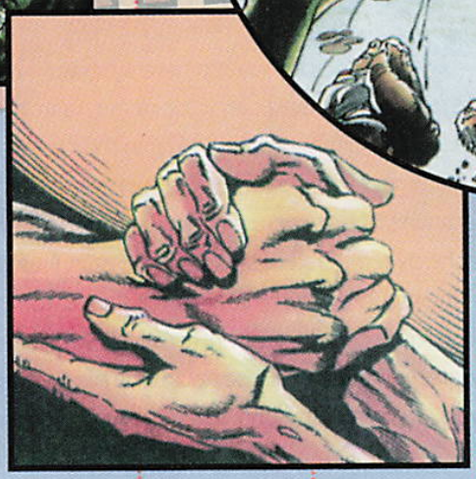
June 1987
Coming from the Lost Land, Turok arrives in Columbia, South America.

Oct 1992
Turok and X-O Manowar hunt bionisaurs in New York.



Feb 1993
Turok is briefly reunited with Andar, who dies soon after.

June 4001
Turok and Magnus meet in the Lost Land.



Young Peter Stanchek was living his life as a relatively normal, shy and studious young man when he began to notice he had unusual powers. He could read minds, move objects with the force of his thoughts, and make others obey his will. Peter was a little confused and frightened by his abilities, so at the urging of his best friend Joe Irons, he contacted the Harbinger Foundation. The Foundation had been advertising in the newspaper that it could help people with unusual abilities.

As the Foundation began testing Peter, the company's owner and founder Toyo Harada took a special interest in him. Peter was unlike any other Harbinger he'd ever seen. He exhibited multiple abilities, and whereas all other Harbingers' powers had remained dormant until Harada activated them, Peter's manifested themselves without his aid.

Under Harada's personal supervision, Peter began to grow quite powerful, but the young man's newfound powers began to change him. He began to ignore and argue with his friend Joe, and he used his power to make Kris Hathaway, a classmate he had admired from afar, become his girlfriend.

Peter eventually realized that he was letting his abilities influence his personality, and he told Harada that he needed to take a break from his training. This displeased Harada greatly, as he felt that Peter had grown far too powerful to go outside of his control. Thinking that it was his friend Joe that was causing Peter's change of heart, the Foundation secretly had Joe murdered.

But this served to make Peter highly suspicious of the Foundation. Harada ultimately felt he had no choice but to eliminate Peter. If such awesome power could not be harnessed, it must be destroyed, reasoned Harada. The Harbinger agent Rachel Hopson attempted to shoot Peter in the back of the head, but somehow, his subconscious mind saved him. The psychic backlash created by Peter's mind as a result of the attack destroyed an entire Harbinger Foundation building. He and Kris (who was no longer under his mind control) hit the road to plan their next move.

Fighting Back

Peter and Kris hit upon the idea of striking back at the Harbinger Foundation by intercepting letters sent to the corporation, and warning the kids who wrote in about what the Foundation was really like. After stealing a batch of mail meant for the Foundation from the post office, Peter and Kris began to contact the letter-writers. Their first stop was the home of Faith Herbert. Although Faith insisted she had special abilities, when Peter used his power to take a look in her mind, he concluded that she only wished she had powers. But after they left, they discovered that Faith did indeed have a power—the ability to fly. Somehow, Peter had turned on Faith's Harbinger ability when he probed her mind. An avid comic book fan, Faith took the name Zephyr, and dubbed Pete "Sting" for the way his mind probes hurt. She insisted on helping Peter and Kris in their task.

Their next step was to raid a Harbinger Foundation building in Atlanta, Georgia, to get more names and addresses of potential harbingers. While there, Pete met Charlene Dupre, and used his power to activate her latent abilities. Known as Flamingo to her friends, Charlene has the ability to raise her body temperature sufficiently to start fires and melt various objects.

Flamingo gladly joined their little group (with some slight resistance from Kris, who felt she was out to snare Peter for her own), but their next recruit was a little harder to convince. John Torkelson was a mechanic in Decatur, Georgia who had little use for a bunch of kids who had weird powers. A lifetime of abuse had made him very apprehensive about trusting others. But after Peter activated his Harbinger ability, which was great strength, John, taking the name Torque, decided to at least stick with the group long enough

to get better acquainted with Flamingo and Kris. Shortly thereafter, the group was attacked by the Harbinger Foundation's Eggbreakers, and they had no choice but to band together against the threat of Toyo Harada and the Harbinger Foundation.

Kids on the Run

The kids survived that encounter with the Eggbreakers, although Kris was badly injured during the battle. Taking her to a hospital for treatment, they were befriended by Dr. Heyward, who even let them use his house and car. As they took some time to rest and regroup at Heyward's house, subtle tensions began to develop within the group, as Peter noticed a friendship developing between his girlfriend Kris and Torque, while she was trying to teach him to read. This also upset Flamingo, who wanted Torque for herself. Putting these problems aside for the moment, the group expanded their efforts to strike back at Harbinger by raiding Harbinger Foundation facilities and persuading other Harbingers to join their cause.

After having retrieved a computer disk from one Harbinger installation, they met with a young computer whiz named Ax to get his help in breaking into the disk. Ax had an affinity with machines that vastly increased after Sting activated his latent Harbinger powers. The computer disk turned out to contain a list of Spider Alien landing sites. Investigating one of the sites, the group took an unexpected trip to the moon in a pre-programmed Spider Alien ship. Ax betrayed them there by siding with the aliens, who needed his incredible ability with machines to help them build ships to flee the solar system, because Solar had destroyed all their deep-space ships. The group eventually escaped the aliens' clutches, but earned Ax's animosity in the process (this no doubt due to the fact that Flamingo burnt him badly in...ahem, let's just say a rather tender spot).

A raid on a Harbinger Foundation installation in New Orleans had even less pleasant results. Sting helped the Harbinger Puff regain control of his powers there, but afterwards, the kids were repelled by Harada and his forces. The kids escaped, but Harada learned of their next plan and set up an Eggbreaker ambush. During that ambush, Torque was killed by the Eggbreaker Rock.

The group had little time to mourn their fallen comrade before being whisked away to the Unity conflict by Geoff the Geomancer. While in the Lost Land, Kris gave birth to a baby. This child, whose father was Torque, was taken from her by Geoff. Claiming that the baby would grow up to become Magnus, Geoff compelled Solar to send him to the 41st century, and under the robot 1-A's guidance, the child did indeed become North Am's famed robot fighter. Sting played a critical role in the Unity conflict by helping to free Solar from a cincture wormhole, allowing Solar to eventually defeat Erica Pierce.

Returning from the Unity conflict, the kids rested with the Heyward family for a while, and then rented an apartment in New Jersey and began to look for jobs, in an attempt to lead at least something of a normal life. That did not mean that they had given up their vendetta against the Harbinger Foundation, however, and they soon tried to recruit a likely prospect with super-fast reflexes named Shatiqua, whom they found in an arcade, playing video games with uncanny ability.

That recruitment process and their attempt to lead normal lives was rudely interrupted by the H.A.R.D. Corps, who captured Sting, Flamingo, and Kris using tranquilizer darts. Knowing that the kids were Harbingers, the Corps' purpose was to add their powers to the Harbinger Powers Data Base, which allows the H.A.R.D. Corps psi-borgs to simulate Harbinger powers. Zephyr and Shatiqua were able to track their lost comrades to a secret H.A.R.D. Corps installation in upstate New York, and after Zephyr awakened Sting, the Corps was no match for his psionic powers.

This encounter was an omen (no pun intended) of things to come, because despite finding jobs and friends, the normal life the team members so desperately craved simply was not to be. Their struggle with Harada and others seemed to have escalated beyond their control. After taking part in a chaotic battle with the Eggbreakers, Ax, and a crew of rogue Harbingers, the kids were contacted by a Harbinger named Screen. Screen was a former Eggbreaker with considerable experience, and he told them that Harada had far more control over their lives than they thought.

Before the kids could ponder the implications of Screen's mysterious words, they became involved in an adventure that led them to Iran. They made the error of rescuing a Harbinger—Natalie Toynbee, codenamed Stunner—from the Foundation located there. Stunner became something of a problem, because as the daughter of an influential ambassador, she was spoiled beyond belief, and was used to the finer things in life. The kids could hardly provide her with the lifestyle to which she was accustomed.

They didn't have to worry about this problem for too long, as Stunner's father had hired the services of a Harbinger named Kaliph to ascertain the whereabouts of his daughter. Finding her in the company of the kids, Kaliph discovered Sting's power, and used tranquilizer darts to subdue all the group members, taking Sting and Stunner to his fortress in Iran. The rest of the crew, under Screen's direction, made the trek to Iran to liberate their comrades, although it turned out to be something of a wasted effort. Stunner chose to return to the Harbinger Foundation.

The Final Conflict

Although dispirited by recent events, Sting and his group of rogues continued their raids on Harbinger Foundation facilities. During one raid, Sting encountered and mind-probed one of Harada's top men, Walter Sakai. Sakai knew something that disturbed Peter greatly, because he wouldn't even talk to the other kids about it. Later that day, Sting phoned Harada and demanded a confrontation, getting so upset that he virtually wrecked the group's apartment with his psionic powers. A few days later, the kids were awakened in the middle of the night by a phone call. It triggered something in Zephyr, Kris, and Flamingo, and those three attacked Shatiqua and Sting. The struggle ended with Shatiqua falling out of their second story window to her death.

An ambulance carted off Zep, Kris,

THE LIFE OF TOYO HARADA

Toyo Harada is one of the world's most powerful men, in every sense of the word. His vast psionic powers include telepathy, telekinesis, mind control, and numerous other abilities. As the founder of the Harbinger Foundation, he controls one of the world's largest corporations.

Born in 1947 in Hiroshima, Japan, Harada and his parents discovered his unusual abilities at an early age. Sorely afraid of their son's strange powers, his parents took him to various doctors and specialists in an attempt to find out what made him different and perhaps put a stop to it, but to no avail. With his blossoming abilities, young Toyo easily discerned his parents' fear, and even hatred of him, and during one night in 1957, he killed them using his telekinetic abilities.

Having a brilliant mind in addition to his other mental abilities, Harada turned his attentions to the business world. He owned and operated a large company at a young age, but even that wasn't enough of a challenge for him. He decided that he didn't like the world the way it was, and he decided to change it.

To help him change the world, Harada set up his Harbinger Foundation in Japan in 1977 to help him find other people with special abilities. By 1980, he had a Harbinger facility in New York as well, and in the next decade, the Harbinger Foundation spread around the world. Harbinger literally means "forerunner", and the term is used to describe beings with unique abilities, like Harada, who may be precursors of a new stage in human evolution. The Harbingers' powers are reflected in their personalities. Harada himself is an Omega Harbinger, which means that in addition to his other vast powers, he has the ability to activate other Harbingers' latent abilities.

Under his control, the vast resources of the Harbinger Foundation are used to locate and train Harbingers, who will be used in Harada's plan to shape the world as he sees fit. Harada truly sees his plan as the salvation of the human race. Of course, such an all-encompassing agenda is bound to meet with opposition. Omen Enterprises' H.A.R.D. Corps was designed specifically to oppose the Harbinger Foundation's plans. Furthermore, there have occasionally been rogue Harbingers who have resisted the Foundation.

Heeding the adage which says, "In order to make an omelet, you have to break a few eggs," Harada has prepared for such opposition with specially combat-trained Harbinger operatives whom he calls Eggbreakers. The Eggbreakers are used to retrieve rogue Harbingers and defend Harbinger Foundation interests around the globe.

Although he may not be totally evil, Harada's exploits have made him one of the most feared men in the Valiant Universe. Under different circumstances, he might have been a hero, but his obsession with changing the world at any cost has forever branded him a villain.

and Flamingo after the incident, and Sting spent half the night searching hospitals for his friends. His inability to find them infuriated him, and after he created havoc at St Mary's hospital in New Jersey, Screen arrived on the scene to settle him down. Even though they knew it was what Harada wanted them to do, the two infiltrated the Harbinger Foundation headquarters in New York the next day in search of their friends.

Sting was angry beyond reason at this point, and he easily defeated Harada's guards and Eggbreakers, although Screen was killed in a confrontation with the Eggbreaker Rock. Finally reaching Harada, Sting learned that the information he had gleaned from Sakai was true: Harada had been covertly controlling his life for these many months. His friends, and even his girlfriend Kris, had been under Harada's control. After asking Sting to join him of his own free will, Harada attempted to take control of his mind by force.

The ensuing psionic conflict was of epic proportions, actually levelling entire buildings. When the dust cleared, Harada lay in a coma and Peter was left without his powers. Kris and Zephyr—no longer under Harada's control —headed for home, while Pete and Flamingo took off for parts unknown, and haven't been seen since.

The New Harbingers

When Zephyr made her way home, she found her old house empty and a Harbinger Foundation representative waiting there. From there she was taken to a Harbinger Foundation training facility in Bolivar, Missouri, not knowing if her former life and parents were real or fiction. As a former renegade, she found that there were those at the school—Eggbreakers whom she and her friends had fought—who did not want her there.

But she has been able to make some friends, too. Jolt, Anvil, Camouflage, and Sonix, collectively known as the Detention Squad to their trainers, welcomed her into their group. She has also befriended Tyger, her group's latest addition and team leader.

The Harbinger Foundation itself has experienced some turmoil in its founder's absence. Some executives like Walter Sakai and Katsumi have taken the opportunity to further their own careers, while others such as Takashi Kuramoto, bitter after years of being dominated by Harada, are striving to tear down everything that Harada has built up.

This internal strife will continue to be a focal point of the book, according to writer Maurice Fontenot. "What I want to do in the book is focus more on the Harbinger Foundation, and what goes on inside the Foundation and the students who are there," he explains. "That is why I incorporated Zephyr into the school; [I will] use her as kind of a connection to the older issues—to get her reactions to actually being in the Harbinger Foundation now after she had spent so many years fighting against it.

"I think it is really interesting, because you get to a point where nothing is as black-and-white as you thought it was. That is what Zephyr is starting to realize.

The whole thing for her before centered around [seeing] the Harbinger Foundation as bad guys, and Sting and her pals as good guys. When she gets to the Foundation, she realizes that just like any big company, there are good people and bad people there.

"She realizes that because she has actually found friends at the Foundation," Fontenot explains. "I think she is beginning to care for them a lot, and she is kind of torn, because she doesn't really [like] being there. But the people she hangs out with are good people. Should she stay or should she go? Should she attempt to leave [alone,] or try to recruit her friends to leave with her? That is some of the stuff I want to get into later on in the book.

"One upcoming issue is also going to feature the return of Harada," Fontenot reveals. "What happens is that H.A.R.D. Corps decides that this should be the perfect opportunity, since Harada is in a coma, to take him out. They break into the Harbinger Foundation, and they [plan to] kill Harada while he is in his coma. What happens is that the H.A.R.D. Corps guys run into Zephyr and the main group that I focus on in the book."

The so-called Detention Squad manages to repel the Corps, and the Corps' mission will end up having some interesting consequences. "One thing the H.A.R.D. Corps does manage to do is to record Harada's powers," Fontenot explains. "In future issues of *H.A.R.D. Corps*, they are going to focus on that. But what happens is that the Corps wakes him up with this scanner that they used to record his powers. That's what snaps him out of the coma. So, having gone to kill Harada, they end up being responsible for putting him back into power."

After Harada's return, the series will continue to focus on Zephyr and her friends. "The Detention Squad is really like a bunch of bad, truant kids. They don't follow rules, and the powers that be decided that the best way to handle this was to put all their bad kids together so they could keep an eye on them," Fontenot explains.

But that didn't seem to prevent the kids from causing trouble, so the Foundation's new plan is to split them up, which will cause even greater problems. "At this point, the group members have become pretty good friends, and they don't want to break up," says Fontenot. "So in issue #31, they go and meet with Harada. The kids actually get to be in the presence of Toyo Harada, and they are able to talk Harada into letting them stay together as a group."

The Detention Squad will then take a road trip to a new training facility, running into a bit of trouble on the way. "I want to do a whole story where they run into a Harbinger town, kind of like a tribute to a *Twilight Zone* episode," remarks Fontenot. "They run into a town that is ruled by one kid who has Harbinger powers. I'm thinking he probably has the powers to create earthquakes or tremors; he's a really powerful young man. He just rules this little town in the middle of the boondocks, and they have to deal with him."

Although the characters involved in *Harbinger* have changed, the focus has not. This new breed of humans known as the Harbingers will continue to change the world, for better or worse.

☆

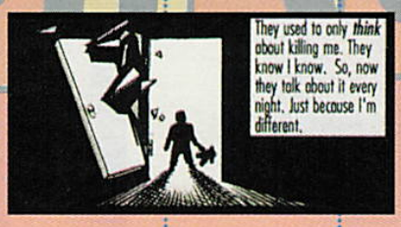
HARBINGER TIMELINE

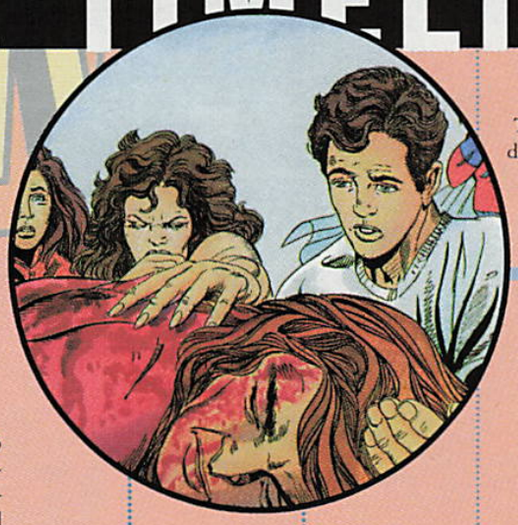
1947 Toyo Harada is born in Hiroshima, Japan.

1957 Harada murders his parents.

1977 Harada founds the Harbinger Foundation in Japan.

June 1991 Sting, Zephyr, Flamingo, Torque, and Kris form a team.





Mar 1992 Torque is murdered during an Eggbreaker ambush.

July 1993 Shatiqua and Screen are killed, and Sting confronts Harada in an epic battle of psionic powers, resulting in the loss of Pete's powers and Harada falling into a coma.

Apr 1992 Shatiqua joins the team.

Jan 1993 Screen contacts the group.

Nov 1993 Zephyr begins training at the Missouri Harbinger facility.

2062 Zephyr leads the resistance against Harada in the Harbinger Wars.

2987 John Stanchek, a descendant of Peter, becomes leader of the resistance.

2990 John Stanchek defeats Toyo Harada, ending the Harbinger Wars.

THE BEGINNING OF THE VALIANT ERA •

Shadowman
THE NIGHT IS CALLING

The Shadowman is a mystically-powered champion of good who was created to counter the threat of the necromancer known as Master Darque. Seeing Darque as a threat to humanity, a group of practicioners of the mystic arts—which banded together and became known as the Coven—endowed each chosen Shadowman with the ability to use necromantic energy to be used against Darque.

About a century ago, the Coven chose Maxim St. James to be the first Shadowman. St. James served the Coven for a time, and was able to destroy Darque's instructor in the mystic arts, Anton Quigley. Thereafter, he defied the Coven for unknown reasons.

In recent times, Darque has grown almost inconceivably powerful; thus the Coven has chosen another Shadowman. That man is Jack Boniface, a successful saxophone player from New Orleans. Boniface has not been asked if he wanted to be Shadowman; he has simply been chosen.

Anticipating the creation of a new Shadowman, Master Darque conspired with the nefarious Spider Aliens to introduce an alien virus into Jack's body to block his incoming power. One evening, after playing a set at a local nightclub, Jack was seduced by a Spider Alien named Lydia, posing as an attractive woman who admired his music. She drugged him, and began to feed on his blood. Lydia was ignorant of the details of her alien masters' contract with Darque, thinking that she was supposed to kill him. Her masters snatched her away before she could do so, but not before she had introduced the virus into Jack's body.

At the same time, the Coven performed a ceremony to create a convergence of the Darque Powers, transferring them to a blue mask, and leaving it for Jack to find. Through the mask, Jack would be able to acquire power gradually. The virus in Jack's blood served to partially block his access to the Darque Power, but it also seemed to make him stronger at times.

Awakening the next morning to find puncture wounds on his neck, with Lydia nowhere in sight. On impulse, he checked her attic, and found decomposing human remains there.

The next night, while pondering what had happened, Jack began to feel a compulsion to hunt her down. Though he didn't find her, he did find the mysterious blue mask that the Coven left for him. As he donned the mask, Jack's transformation into Shadowman had begun.

In the early days of his transformation into Shadowman, Jack only knew that he had some strange urge to go out at night and fight crime. He seemed like almost a different person after the sun went down—stronger, more aggressive, more violent, and utterly fearless. He reveled in his battles with criminals; his quest to fight evil became almost like a physical need. In addition, he developed a fondness for darkness—seemingly drawing his strength from it—and reached peak physical condition, even though he never exercised regularly.

Boniface had no idea what had happened to him, but his housekeeper Nettie seemed to know something about it. She claimed that Jack was possessed by a voodoo loa (spirit) which caused these changes and compelled him to fight evil. According to her, this loa causes his own soul to come out at night and do battle, and she made him a costume which is symbolic of this. Unfortunately, Jack had neither the means nor the time to investigate these claims before he was sent to an even greater mystery.

Nettie and one of her friends, Paul N'Dour, convinced Jack that the power of Shadowman was needed in another place to battle a demon. They took him to a swamp where Shadowman found a passage to another world. He traversed it, and surfaced in the Lost Land, where the forces of Erica Pierce and those gathered by Geoff the Geomancer and Solar were already doing battle. Shadowman ended up on the wrong side of the battle, however, when he saw Solar streaking through the sky, and assumed that Solar was the demon he was sent to defeat. As Solar confronted Pierce, Shadowman jumped him from behind, giving Pierce a moment to entrap Solar, but not before Solar nearly burned Shadowman to a crisp with his power.

Shadowman was then nursed back to health by Elya, one of Pierce's soldiers from the future. Elya, an admirer of Jack's music, told him that the history books show that Shadowman is fated to die in 1999. Unfortunately, while fleeing the Lost Land with Elya in tow, using the underwater tunnel he had come through when he arrived, Elya mysteriously vanished—spirited away to her own time by the manipulations of Solar. But armed with the knowledge of the date of his death, Shadowman became more fearless than ever.

Learning to be Shadowman

In the early days of his new career, Jack delighted in his exploits as Shadowman, going out of his way to look for trouble. He earned a reputation as the masked vigilante Shadowman after defeating an ax-wielding serial killer in New Orleans.

He also attracted the attention of blackmailer, child pornographer, and all-around scuzzball Emil Sosa. Sosa's Harbinger power to drain his victims' souls—killing them in the process—made him a formidable opponent. Looking for a challenge, Sosa stalked Shadowman, ambushed him, and brought him back to his plantation near New Orleans. With the help of one of Sosa's maids, Shadowman escaped captivity and put Sosa out of commission.

A later skirmish was even more dangerous. After returning from the Lost Land to the Louisiana swamp he had left, Shadowman found his friend Paul N'Dour dead, and his housekeeper Nettie missing. Directed by the voodoo magic of N'Dour's widow, Shadowman returned to the bayou to find the family of serial killers who had taken Nettie. With the help of another family in the bayou, Shadowman destroyed the evil folk and rescued his housekeeper.

Shadowman's next encounter set him on a path to meet the man he was created to oppose. Still unable to control his nightly transformations into Shadowman, or stop himself from seeking out evil to destroy, Jack trailed his junkie musician acquaintance Marty one night in the hopes of shutting down his drug supplier. Shadowman

MASTER DARQUE

Master Darque may be Shadowman's major nemesis, but he's been a thorn in the side of almost every other hero in the Valiant Universe, as well. At the root of Darque's villainy is his insatiable quest for power and knowledge. Possessing simple powers such as levitation shortly after his birth over 191 years ago, Darque began to seek even greater power through knowledge in New Orleans in 1840. There he became a student of sensualist Anton Quigley. Quigley possessed extensive knowledge of the arcane arts, and as his pupil, Darque soon became quite powerful.

His powers were such that after Quigley had slain his sister Sandria, Darque was able to return her to life, not merely as an undead zombie, but as a truly living (albeit necromantic) being. She now needs infusions of necromantic energy to sustain her life. She and Darque share some sort of psychic bond, and if she were to die, Darque would soon die as well (and vice versa).

As great as his powers were, Darque became vastly more powerful after Solar destroyed his alternate universe in the accident that thrust him into our own universe. Darque has been able to tap into the vast amount of necromantic energy that the deaths of the innumerable beings of Solar's alternate universe created.

Darque has, of course, been using his newfound power to further his quest for knowledge—and thus, even greater power. To aid him, he often creates necromantic minions to do his bidding. Darque can reanimate veritable armies of undead soldiers to overwhelm his opponents. He has also been known to create earth, water, and fire elementals, but the being known as Doctor Eclipse is perhaps his greatest creation. Eclipse, who was formerly a man named Fred Bender, is a creature of pure necromantic energy.

Darque has considerable innate power as well. Flight, pyrokinesis, and telepathy are all part of his basic abilities. His strange tattoos, which chronicle his evil deeds, can be projected from his body to perform evil deeds as well. The tattoos are also an indication of his strength. When they appear faded, Darque is weak, but when he is strong, the tattoos seem to stand out from his body.

Of all his abilities, Darque's greatest power comes from his vast knowledge. His continual quest for more knowledge will undoubtably continue to lead him head first into more conflict with the heroes of the Valiant Universe.

got more than he bargained for when—instead of buying drugs—Marty met up with two other men, and began digging up bones in the old "St. Louis No. 1" cemetery. This was more than a simple drug deal; it was voodoo.

Fighting the Darque Power

The next day, Shadowman was disturbed by the events of the previous night, but he was even more perplexed by the phenomenon of "blood runners" in New Orleans. These blood runners were people who suddenly seemed to go crazy and began running, always ending in a bloody death resulting from their heads virtually exploding. Suspecting that this was somehow connected with his friend Marty's nocturnal activities, Jack pretended to want to score some drugs, so that Marty would lead him to his supplier.

But Marty had recognized Jack in his Shadowman guise, and at Master Darque's command, he led Jack into a trap. Darque's underling Clemenceau and a gang of other thugs attempted to kill Shadowman in an abandoned warehouse, but thanks in part to the darkened state of the warehouse, Jack fought himself free, leading Clemenceau on a wild chase that ended in a fiery death for the man.

That was not the end for Darque's servant, however. Using a voodoo ritual, Darque turned the loyal Clemenceau into an undead zombie. A few days later, Clemenceau abducted Jack, and brought him face to face with his nemesis. Darque invited Jack to serve him, offering, in return, to make Jack's deepest desire a reality. Dazed, Jack thought it over, but fell asleep before he could voice a decision. He awoke that night as Shadowman, and escaped from the house in which he was being held.

Finally, Shadowman got to the bottom of Darque's plans and the mysterious blood runners. Darque was granting them their fondest wishes in return for their lives. When he finally claimed these people during their run, he consumed their lifeforces to grow stronger. Darque had set up a ceremony to obtain ultimate power, and when 30 people had run to their deaths, he would be able to gain access to a direct portal into the vast pool of necromantic energy. With direct access to that energy, Darque would become ultimately powerful.

As she sometimes does, Darque's sister Sandria opposed his plan. When Jack himself became a blood runner, remembering the date of his death (as Sandria had prompted him to do) saved him. On the night of the final ceremony, hundreds of Darque's followers assembled in the Louisiana Bayou near the portal that Shadowman had used to gain entrance to the Lost Land. Sandria shielded Shadowman's presence until he could disrupt the ritual, which had to be completed before midnight. Hovering in the air high above his followers, Darque began to draw the final three sacrifices he needed up to himself, choosing among the devotees gathered. With Sandria's help, Shadowman became the final choice. The ceremony failed as Shadowman was able to distract Darque from its completion until after midnight. However, Darque still claimed the lives and energy of the hundreds of people gathered—giving him enough power to last for years.

Finding Himself

After his experience with Darque, Jack decided to get away from his enemy and New Orleans for a while. But somehow, playing a few gigs on the road didn't seem to help much. He couldn't just run away from being Shadowman.

Shadowman saved an old man from his tormentors in Alabama, met a man with the power to turn memories into visions on his way to Nebraska, and ended up in New York, where he encountered Hwen Mirage and Carmen Ruiz. Jack had been arrested by the New York Police, but with Hwen and Carmen's prompting, he cut a deal to take down local drug lord Big Jim McConnel in exchange for his freedom and a clean record in Nebraska, where he had wrecked a bar in which he was playing a gig. After disposing of Big Jim, Jack was ready to return to New Orleans.

Back in the Big Easy, Jack began to find some of the answers to the mysteries of his life. Compelled by a voodoo spell of Nettie's, Jack, Nettie's old friend Aram Armstrong, and Armstrong's partner Obadiah Archer converged on an abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of town. Master Darque had been attracted by the spell as well. After a brief confrontation in which he set Armstrong on fire, Darque (whom Armstrong laughingly

referred to as "Pinky") grew bored, and departed. After he had gone, Nettie appeared, and with Armstrong's help, revealed her true nature to Jack for the first time. More than just his housekeeper, she is really Angenetta, a powerful Voodoo priestess who has been opposing Master Darque for more than a century. She is part of the mysterious Coven who created Shadowman to fight Darque. Nettie attempted to perform a voodoo ritual to free Jack from the effects of the alien virus Darque had caused him to contract, but the ceremony was interrupted by Nazi party extremists under Darque's control.

Jack grew angry at the fact that someone was controlling his destiny without his knowledge or consent, but he didn't have much time to ponder his situation before becoming engulfed in another of Master Darque's plans. Jack had been jamming with the rock group Aerosmith, who were in town for a gig, when one of Darque's minions used voodoo magic to steal lead singer Steven Tyler's singing voice. Tyler overcame his would-be doppelganger, but Master Darque held the musician's life in his hands, threatening to kill him unless Shadowman swore to perform a task for him. So swearing, Shadowman saved Tyler.

Jack planned to renege on that promise, and trying to put the episode behind him, he decided to visit his mother and the man he believed to be his father in Beauregard, Louisiana. Unfortunately, Darque followed him there. Darque reanimated the body of Jack's true father—who had been beaten to death by a group of townspeople years earlier—to take revenge on the town. To end his resurrected father's reign of terror, Shadowman once again pledged to perform a task for Master Darque.

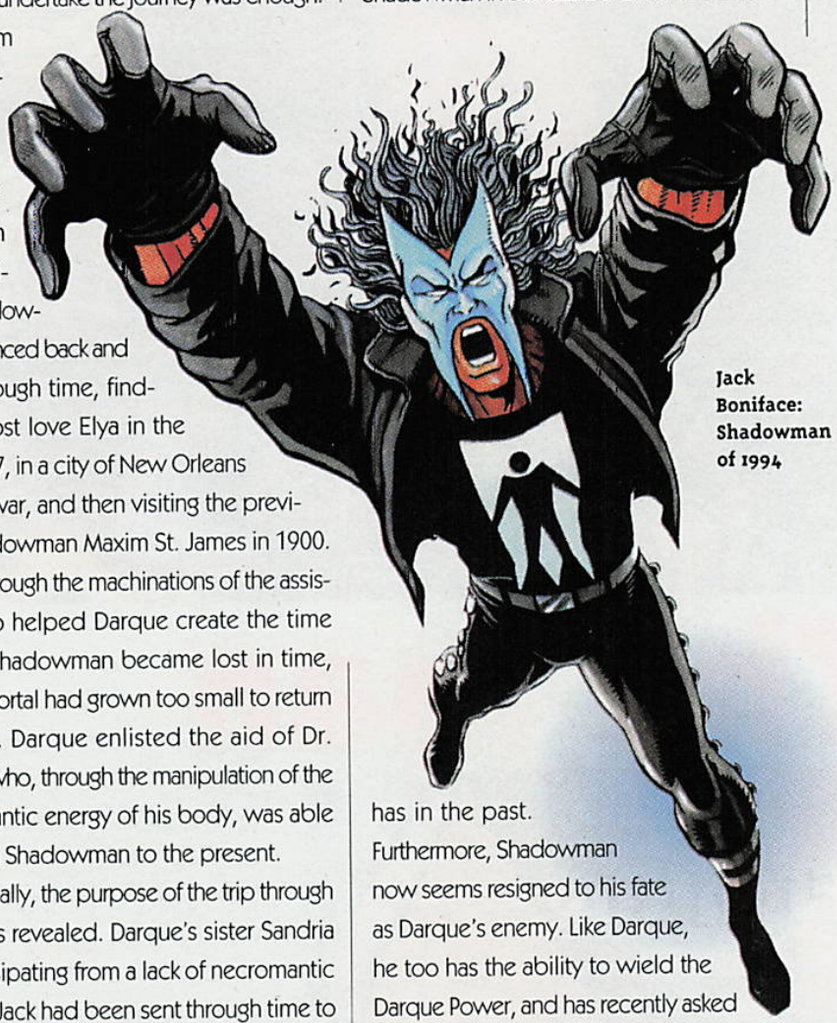
Finally, Darque called upon Shadowman to undertake his quest. For some unknown purpose, Darque wanted him to make a journey through time. It mattered not where; simply to undertake the journey was enough.

From the journey's beginning, the navigation was difficult. Shadowman bounced back and forth through time, finding his lost love Elya in the year 2937, in a city of New Orleans torn by war, and then visiting the previous Shadowman Maxim St. James in 1900.

Through the machinations of the assistant who helped Darque create the time portal, Shadowman became lost in time, for the portal had grown too small to return through. Darque enlisted the aid of Dr. Mirage, who, through the manipulation of the necromantic energy of his body, was able to return Shadowman to the present.

Finally, the purpose of the trip through time was revealed. Darque's sister Sandria was dissipating from a lack of necromantic energy. Jack had been sent through time to gather energy to restore her. Upon his return, he did so, even though by saving Sandria, he was saving Darque as well. Darque hated him for performing this act out of kindness. He stole some of Sandria's energy, and used it to project one of his tattoo-symbols from his body, somehow cursing Jack with it.

But all is not lost for the reckless and brave Shadowman, for when Darque stole his sister's energy, he earned her eternal hate. There is no doubt that she will aid Shadowman in the future even more than she has in the past. Furthermore, Shadowman now seems resigned to his fate as Darque's enemy. Like Darque, he too has the ability to wield the Darque Power, and has recently asked Nettie to show him how. Following the events of the Chaos Effect, Shadowman's power may rival that of Darque himself.



Jack Boniface: Shadowman of 1994

SHADOWMAN TIMELINE

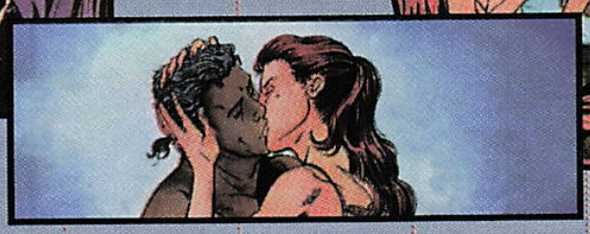
THE BEGINNING OF THE VALIANT ERA

1802
Master Darque is born.

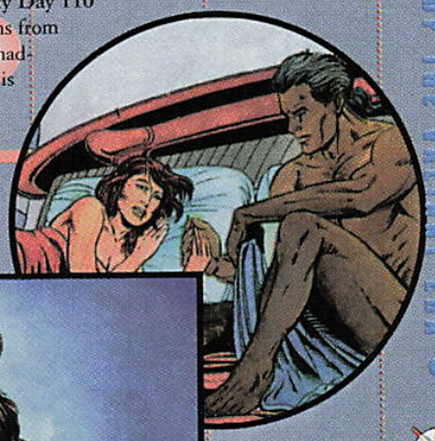
1805
Sandria Darque is born.

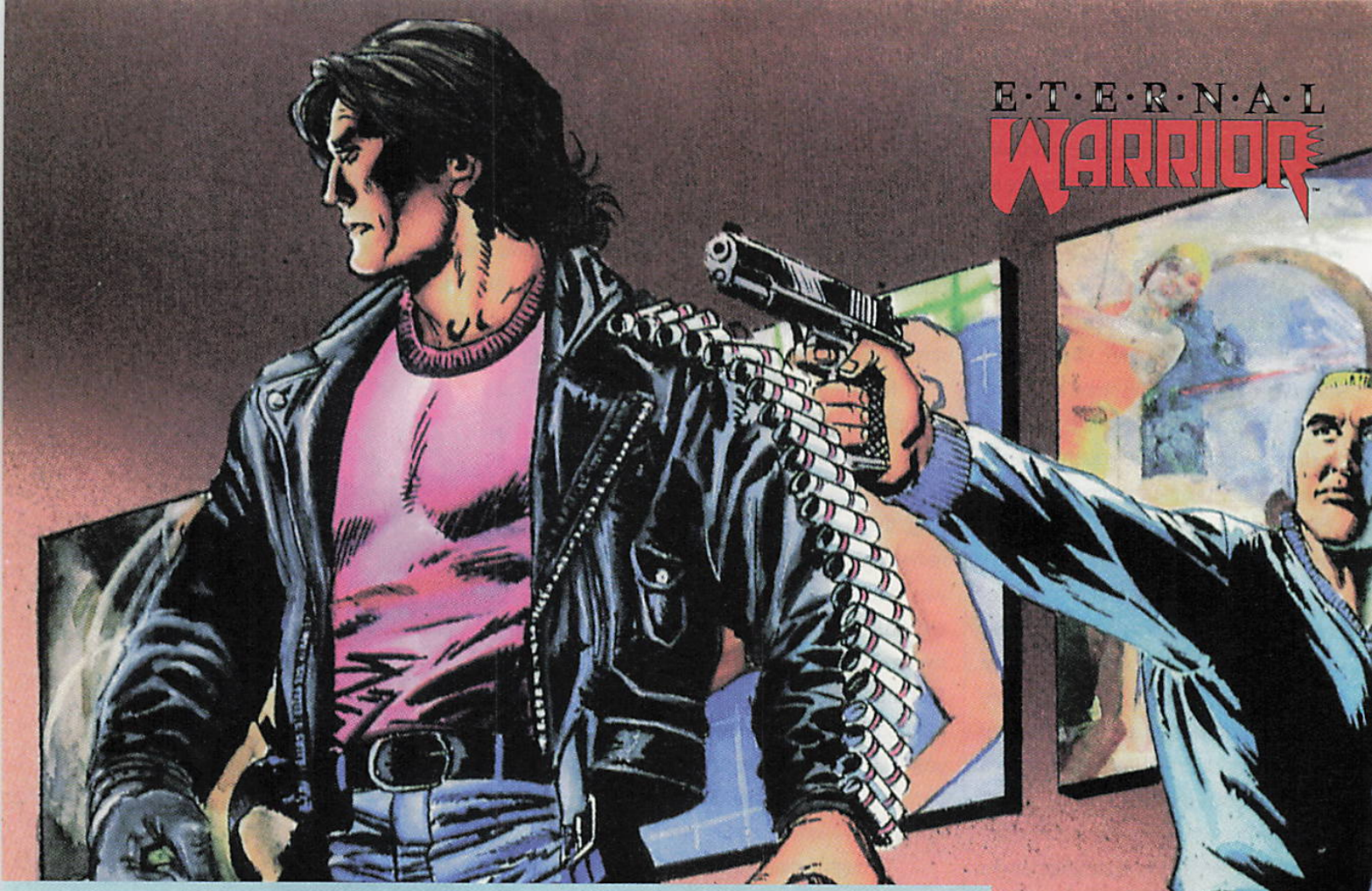
1840
Master Darque appears in New Orleans.

Mar 1992
Jack is attacked by the Spider Alien Lydia, and later becomes Shadowman.



Unity Day 110
Jack learns from Elya that Shadowman is fated to die violently in 1999.





The man

who became the Eternal Warrior was born over 5,000 years ago in Anatolia, a vast plateau between the Black and Mediterranean seas. Even when he was very young, there was obviously something special about this lad, whose name was Gilad. He possessed superhuman strength and a fighting ability which was unmatched, in addition to the ability to heal from any wounds rapidly. His younger brother Aram was even stronger, but he was not as quick a fighter, and did not possess the thirst for battle that Gilad had. Both of them reached physical maturity, and seemed to stop aging after that.

Fighting the Never-Ending Fight

Some 30 years later, in Mesopotamia, Gilad had come to be revered as a god. With Aram's reluctant help, he had led his people to one conquest after another, but he finally ran into an opponent whom his strength and battle savvy could not overcome: the Sumerians. This clan of people had a well-defended city, and possessed the secrets of bows and arrows, copper swords, and armor. Gilad's people were slaughtered, and his young son was captured by his enemies. He thirsted for revenge against the Sumerians, but even his brother Aram abandoned him.

MARK A MO

Gilad encountered a Geomancer at about that time. This man, who could commune with the Earth itself, made Gilad realize that he could become a force for great change in the world. This Geomancer also claimed that the Earth whispered of the coming of a cataclysmic battle, with the fate of the world dependent on the outcome. Gilad became the fist and steel of the Geomancers, to help them protect the Earth itself.

Thus, Gilad became the Eternal Warrior, fighting throughout the centuries wherever the Geomancers said there was need.

Tool of the Geomancers

Since pledging his aid to the Geomancers in 3,228 B.C., the Eternal Warrior has placed his faith in the Earth's chosen to guide him towards the actions that will best serve the interests of the planet and mankind. Though most of the Eternal Warrior's adventures throughout his over 5,000 years of life have of course gone unchronicled, those that have been told bear out the fact that he has indeed worked to play a crucial role in world history.

In China during the second century B.C., the Eternal Warrior and Geomancer Li-Sung fought to place the virtuous Huang Lin on the throne of emperor. Both Huang Lin and Chin Lee had rights of ascension (the previous emperor had died without a son), but Chin Lee was the puppet of the evil General Cheng. Chin Lee and Cheng were defeated by Huang Lin—with the help of the Eternal Warrior—and Cheng committed suicide rather than serve the new emperor, but he would return to face Gilad again as the Immortal Enemy.

Under the direction of the Geomancer Gandhyrras in 12 B.C., Gilad used the Bagh-Nakh to kill the dark priest Tvashtar, in order to prevent his evil shadow from spreading across the globe. The Bagh-Nakh, a ritual dagger that was a soul prison, was subsequently passed down from Geomancer to Geomancer through the generations until it was destroyed by the Eternal Warrior in a conflict with Master Darque.

In the 12th century A.D., Gilad visited the La-Chen monastery in Ladakh, Tibet to retrieve the *Book of the Geomancers,* which had been written by Tashi Khatun. Gilad has safeguarded the book over the centuries, occasionally having to recover it, as he did in the port city of Aquabah while fighting alongside Lawrence of Arabia. Most recently, Gilad has prevented the book from falling into the hands of Master Darque, who would like nothing better than to add the knowledge of Geomancy to his repertoire of mystic lore. Darque had sent his minions Hook, Welt, and Bolo to steal the book from Gilad, but with the help of NYPD Detective Tom Morgan, the book was kept safe from Master Darque.

The Duchess Angelique D'Terre, a Geomancer in the 17th century, compelled Gilad and his brothers Aram and Ivar to help her avert the French Revolution. On this rare occasion, instinct failed a Geomancer, for King Louis' older brother Henri proved to be a far more ruthless tyrant than the King himself was. Gilad ended up killing Henri, and restoring Louis to his rightful place on the throne.

Gilad enjoyed a close relationship with the Geomancer Buck McHenry in the latter half of the 1800's. Buck saved Gilad from being hung in 1889. After serving as a Geomancer for over 100 years, Buck finally succeeded in passing his legacy to his young nephew Geoff, after two other successors had failed to become Geomancers.

One of those failed Geomancers became bitter, and later sought to gain revenge on Geoff for usurping his rightful place. This man had learned the ways of Geomancy under Buck McHenry, but when his moment of truth came in a battle at Gallipoli, Turkey in 1915, he was broken by the horrors of war, and the Geomancy passed him by. In the place of the whispers of the Earth, he heard only the cries of men's pain. He later learned peace as a priest, but when Geoff became the Geomancer, his pain re-awoke. He attempted to force the Eternal Warrior to bring Geoff to him so that he could kill him and thus take the Geomancy for himself. Geoff came on his own, guided by the man's pain, but the fallen Geomancer's quest ended in his own death. (This story occured in the recent *Eternal Warrior Yearbook.*)

Geoff has served the Earth well as Geomancer. His guidance was critical during the Unity crisis, as he was able to lead Solar, Gilad, and the rest of Valiant's present-day heroes to the heart of the conflict. More recently, his aid was pivotal in preventing Master Darque from obtaining more of a set of the 30 silver necromantic coins. Ironically, Gilad has encountered these coins many times during his life. They had been used to pay off Judas to betray Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem. At the direction of Geomancer Jared Sahin, Gilad was present during Jesus' crucifixion, and he ended up travelling from Jerusalem with a potter who had received the coins as payment for his land. By 1453, the coins had fallen into the hands of the evil Malloch in the mountains of Northern Ireland, who used their vast power to perpetrate his evil.

The coins had been imbued with a vast quantity of necromantic energy through Christ's death, and together, their power was nearly all-encompassing. Over the years, they had become separated and scattered across the globe. Recently, Master Darque challenged the Eternal Warrior to a race to retrieve the coins. Darque's purpose in this was to wear the Warrior down, while he himself gained more power as he accumulated the coins. When Darque reached the zenith of his strength, he planned to kill Geoff and enslave Gilad.

As is his custom, Darque created necromantic servants to do his dirty work. In Maine, and again in Virginia, Gilad and Geoff tussled with an Earth elemental before retrieving two of the coins. But Darque's forces found their share of the coins as well. After each side had recovered a few of the coins, the hunt took them to an archeological dig in Saudi Arabia. There, a water elemental wrested one of the coins from Gilad's grasp. Gilad had also been hampered by the effects of the seductive Madamoiselle Noire, whom Darque had made irresistible to men through his Darque Power.

Fortunately, Dr. Mirage and Carmen Ruiz arrived to even the odds. Battling a fire elemental, Dr. Mirage ended up absorbing the necromantic coin. This ended the search for further coins, as neither side had a method of finding the next coin

with the last coin destroyed.

Although Gilad has described Geoff as one of the best Geomancers he's known, their association will soon come to an end. Following the absence of Geoff after Chaos Effect, the Eternal Warrior will be forced to select a new Geomancer to serve as the eyes and ears of the Earth.

The Immortal Enemy

The Eternal Warrior has encountered his Immortal Enemy many times since first confronting him as the evil General Cheng in the second century B.C. Years after this battle, Gilad realized that the Enemy could transfer his spirit to the bodies of others, but always appeared with one brown and one green eye. By the time of their encounter in Abu Simbel, Egypt in 79 A.D., the Eternal Warrior had slain the Enemy many times.

The Immortal Enemy always seeks a position of great power from which to spread his evil. Usually, the Geomancers can guide Gilad to the Enemy before he can reach such a position, but in 970 A.D., in Rome, Italy, Gilad had been delayed by taking an excursion through time with his brother Ivar. By the time he returned, the Enemy had become a Cardinal of the Catholic Church.

In the present day, the Immortal Enemy had become a drug dealer named Javier Caldone. Gilad tracked him down in Bogota, Columbia, and attempted to kill him as he had done so many times before. Their struggle ended up in an airplane, which crashed after the Warrior had been thrown free. Horribly burned and mutilated by the airplane crash, Caldone was in a hospital in Manhattan when the Eternal Warrior tracked him down again. But before Gilad could slay the monster yet again, he managed to transfer himself into the body of one of his nurses, and he was eventually able to surprise Gilad and take control of the body of the hero himself! Under Geoff's direction, Gil's friend Bloodshot tracked the Immortal Enemy back to Columbia, and when the Enemy tried to usurp Bloodshot's body, the nanites in Bloodshot's veins were able to fight him off. The Enemy escaped through a computer terminal, where he was able to find yet another host with which to spread his evil.

Working for the Company

From time to time, Gilad has lent his skills to the causes of British intelligence taskmaster Neville Alcott. While the Eternal Warrior's superhuman abilities have served Neville greatly, the Warrior also benefits from the situation by way of receiving a cover, passports, and other documents that allow him to keep a low profile and travel freely when he needs to. Of course, it also gives Gilad an opportunity to do what he does best: fight evil.

Although it is unknown whether he was working for Neville at this point, Gilad was a British Intelligence agent in 1967 when he rescued fellow agent Joe Nicoletti from a prison camp in Vietnam. At some time in the past, Neville and Gilad functioned as a covert team in the field.

However, after the Unity ordeal—in which Gilad actually met his older self—the Warrior decided to retire from Neville's service. Fortunately, Gilad found a good replacement in his new friend Bloodshot. Bloodshot tracked down the Eternal Warrior after he discovered Gilad's name in the computer files of Project Rising Spirit, the experimental lab from which Bloodshot had escaped. It seems that the Project's dying owner Mr. Iwatsu was another of the people who wanted Gilad's secret of Eternal Life. After "retiring", the Warrior has still had occasion to work with Bloodshot on missions, such as when they traced a drug dealer to Hong Kong and ran into Mr. Iwatsu's right-hand man Tanaka.

Rock of Ages: Gilad has seen and done it all!

E.T.E.R.N.A.L

The Eternal Future

In the future, *Eternal Warrior* readers will learn much more about the Eternal Warrior's 5,000-year past, according to series writer Kevin VanHook. "The thing I hear more than anything is, 'I always love the first four to five pages of *Eternal Warrior* the best.'—the history stories. What I'm doing are two issues that take place in the past entirely," says VanHook. "In the March issue, the Eternal Warrior is at the time of Alexander the Great, when he rode through and actually conquered India. I'm setting up some things in there that show that the Geomancers have not always been tried-and-true honest people who took to their duties well. There were times, and this is one of them, where a Geomancer used the power of Geomancy for personal gain."

"This Geomancer was the boyhood friend of a young man named Alexander, whose father was killed and suddenly thrust into power," VanHook continues. "But since the Earth talked to him, he was told [about] all of these things that he could conquer. When Gil tries to stop him, he has Gil imprisoned and tortured. It is a very tough time for Gil, and it is a two-year span, which he comes out of with a different attitude. Up until that point, the Geomancers had been these people who had deserved the mantle, by and large. This one was a young guy who was very twisted and looked at it purely for personal gain. So that one I'm very excited about."

The next historic saga will deal with two characters who have figured prominently in the *Eternal Warrior* series. "The next issue deals with the fact that the Eternal Warrior's role in life is to be the fist and steel of the Earth, the protector and the man who will see to it that the Geomancer's will—which is actually the Earth's will—is enforced," VanHook says. "To strike out at him, the Immortal Enemy actually decided to destroy Buck McHenry in 1912, and this is the story that refers to Buck disappearing in 1912, [after which] we never see him again. This is all explained when young Geoff says, 'I went on a walkabout with my Uncle Buck. He disappeared in 1912.' This is that story."

Eternal Warrior Timeline

3268 B.C. Gilad Anni-Padda is born in Anatolia.

3228 B.C. Gilad encounters a Geomancer for the first time.

210 B.C. Gilad encounters the Immortal Enemy for the first time.

29 Gilad observes the crucifixion of Christ.

1192 Gilad retrieves the Book of the Geomancers from Ladakh.

1320 Gilad battles Spider Aliens in Transylvania.

1497 Gilad is captured by the Spanish Inquisition.

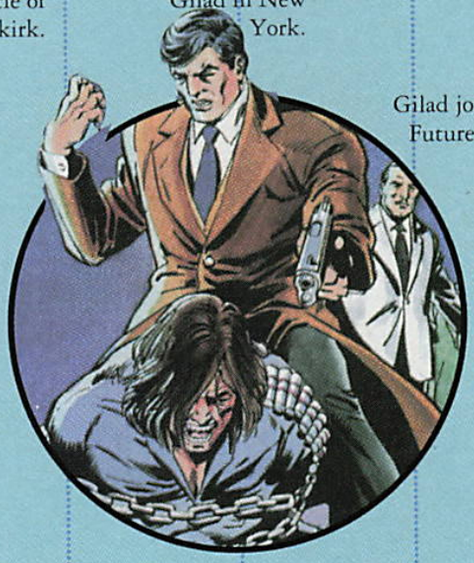
1519 Gilad is present during the death of his friend Leonardo DaVinci.

1834 Gilad takes the last name Abrams from a fallen comrade in the war for Texas' Independence.

1940 Gilad meets Neville Alcott at the Battle of Dunkirk.

Feb 1985 Buck McHenry recruits Geoff to be his successor.

Aug 1991 Angelo Mortalli (who would become Bloodshot) attempts to kill Gilad in New York.



Jun 1992 Gilad meets Bloodshot.

Aug 4001 Gilad is found by Geomancer Rokland Tate. Gilad had been psychoprobed many times, but Rokkie helps him regain his memory.

4002 Gilad joins the Future Force.

Archer & Armstrong

"Valiant's Dysfunctional Duo"

Obadiah Archer is a Harbinger with heightened perception and coordination, making him an expert marksman and a martial artist without equal. His partner, Aram Armstrong, is an immortal who has lived for 5,000 years, and possesses incredible strength and durability. This would seem to give them much in common, since both make excellent warriors, but in truth they are quite different.

Archer grew up in Topeka, Kansas, the son of a minister and his wife. His evangelist parents were not quite the good people they appeared to be. Their murderous activities with innocent children were discovered by Archer one night, and they tried to kill him to keep him quiet. Attempting to make it look like an accident, they tied Obadiah up and set their house afire. Archer did nearly die, but he was rescued from the flames and fled from his hospital before they could try to kill him again.

Hitching a ride aboard a cargo ship, he eventually made his way to Tibet, and he was taken in at the temple at Ladakh, where the residents taught him the arts of armed and unarmed combat. Archer's latent harbinger abilities were activated the night he almost died, and he achieved complete control over his body and flawless aim. Unfortunately, he could not master his rage against his parents, and he soon left Ladakh to seek vengeance upon them.

But upon his return to the U.S., he found that they had been imprisoned shortly after his escape from the hospital. This left Archer without a purpose in life for the first time in years, and he ended up wandering the streets of Los Angeles in search of guidance.

There he encountered Armstrong, the brother of both the Eternal Warrior and Ivar the Timewalker. An immortal who was born over 5,000 years ago, Armstrong has spent his time enjoying life to the fullest, and incidentally crushing evil whenever it has crossed his path. Armstrong had come to live on the streets of L.A., and after he begged Archer for money, the pair began talking. Armstrong's centuries of outrageous drunken adventures were unbelievable to Archer, but the two quickly struck up a friendship.

The source of most of Archer and Armstrong's adventures is a mysterious organization known only as the Cognescenti, or "Sect". Apparently having been created centuries ago, the Sect seems to have tens of thousands of members all over the world, and exists for the sole purpose of destroying Armstrong, whom they consider the devil incarnate. According to the Sect, Armstrong's very existence will eventually create an imbalance in "the great wheel of karma" that will topple the whole of *all* existence. Armstrong himself claims the Sect members are mad at him because he didn't invite them to his 5,000th birthday party.

After capturing Archer and Armstrong in L.A., one of the Sect's leaders, Mahmud, took the pair to Rome. The duo escaped captivity, making their way through an underground passage that surfaced in the Pope's bedroom closet. After exiting the Vatican, they fled through the streets of Rome. With the aid of fellow Sect leader Constantino and the heavily armed nuns known as the Sisters of Doom, Mahmud chased them through the Sistine Chapel. However, the cultists were unable to agree upon how best to kill their quarry (the general consensus pointed to cutting off his head), and the ensuing conflict resulted in Mahmud being burned to a crisp while Archer and Armstrong escaped.

A heavily bandaged Mahmud later returned to plague the pair again, this time with a bit more power behind him. He had acquired Armstrong's satchel, within which Armstrong claimed were "The mysteries of the ancient worlds, the eye of the Sphinx, the trinkets of the gods, the Holy Grail, universes within universes, and the very secrets of life itself." Their struggle took place in "The End of the World" bar in Los Angeles. Mahmud attempted to transform Armstrong into a pig using the Wand of Circe, but he read the spell backwards and ended up turning himself into a pig.

Another Sect member named Wilson Haverford Duerst had cut a deal with the Sect to capture Armstrong in exchange for the restoration of his youth—a feat he apparently intended to accomplish by examining his immortal foe. Armstrong was eager to confront Duerst, because the 124-year-old man had stolen some paintings from him during World War II. Although Archer and Armstrong eluded capture at Duerst's undersea installation off the coast of Florida, they were later subdued in a restaurant owned by Duerst. Drugged and forced to work in a macrobiotic health camp operated by their foe, Archer and Armstrong were soon saved by their neighbor Pamela Trice.

A short time later, Archer received word that his old temple had been attacked by Master Darque. He travelled to New Orleans, and with the help of Shadowman, intends to seek revenge on Darque.

Although Archer will survive his encounter with Darque, he and Armstrong will soon suffer an unknown fate at the hands of an even deadlier foe. The duo will disappear during Chaos Effect, an event of epic proportions. However, Bob Layton promises that the pair will not be not gone for good. "We will drop clues through the entire universe as to where they are at and what happened to them," Layton concludes. Archer & Armstrong fans will certainly be looking for each and every such clue.

THE MAGIC OF LADAKH

The Tibetan province of Ladakh is one of the most amazing locales in the Valiant Universe. Ladakh has been (and will continue to be) the site of many of the most remarkable events in Valiant history. * In the 12th century, the La-Chen monastery in Ladakh was the home of the Geomancer Tashi Khatun. Knowing he would die before passing the mantle of Geomancer to a successor, Tashi Khatun wrote the *Book of the Geomancers* at Ladakh. The Book remained at the monastery until sometime later, when it was retrieved by the Eternal Warrior for safekeeping. * In 1984, Obadiah Archer made his way to Ladakh after narrowly escaping being murdered by his parents. Archer became the finest martial artist and marksman ever trained at the monastery; this was due to his harbinger abilities, which give him uncanny powers of perception and coordination. Unable to master his anger at his parents, Archer was asked to leave the monastery in 1992. * The next year, Master Darque learned of the existence of Tashi Khatun's bones at the Ladakh temple. Knowing that the Geomancer had died before performing ritual suicide with the Bagh-Nakh, which would have removed the power of Geomancy from his body, Darque determined to steal his remains and take the power therein for himself. Arriving at Ladakh, Darque slaughtered the monks of the temple, but before he could usurp the power within Tashi Khatun's bones, he was interrupted by Carmen Ruiz and Hwen Mirage. After a brief necromantic struggle, Darque was rendered unconscious and Dr. Mirage was left rendered intangible. * In the 41st century, the Temple of the Prophet Archer will be built in the tiny Tibetan provence. Takao Konishi will be raised and trained in the ways of battle there, before being infused with the Blood of Heroes and becoming the last Rai. His son, and the son of the last Rai, Tohru Nakadai, will also spend their formative years there.

archer & armstrong timeline

3266 BC Armstrong is born.

3228 BC Gilad and Armstrong part ways after a failed attack on a city in Mesopotamia.

2614 BC Gilad visits Armstrong in Egypt, where Armstrong entertains Pharoah Cheops with feats of strength.

1659 Armstrong joins brothers Gilad and Ivar in an attempt to avert the French Revolution.

1850 Armstrong first meets Master Darque, whom he nicknames "Pinky"

1970 Archer is born.

July 1982 Archer is nearly murdered by his parents.

1984 Archer joins the monastery at Ladakh.

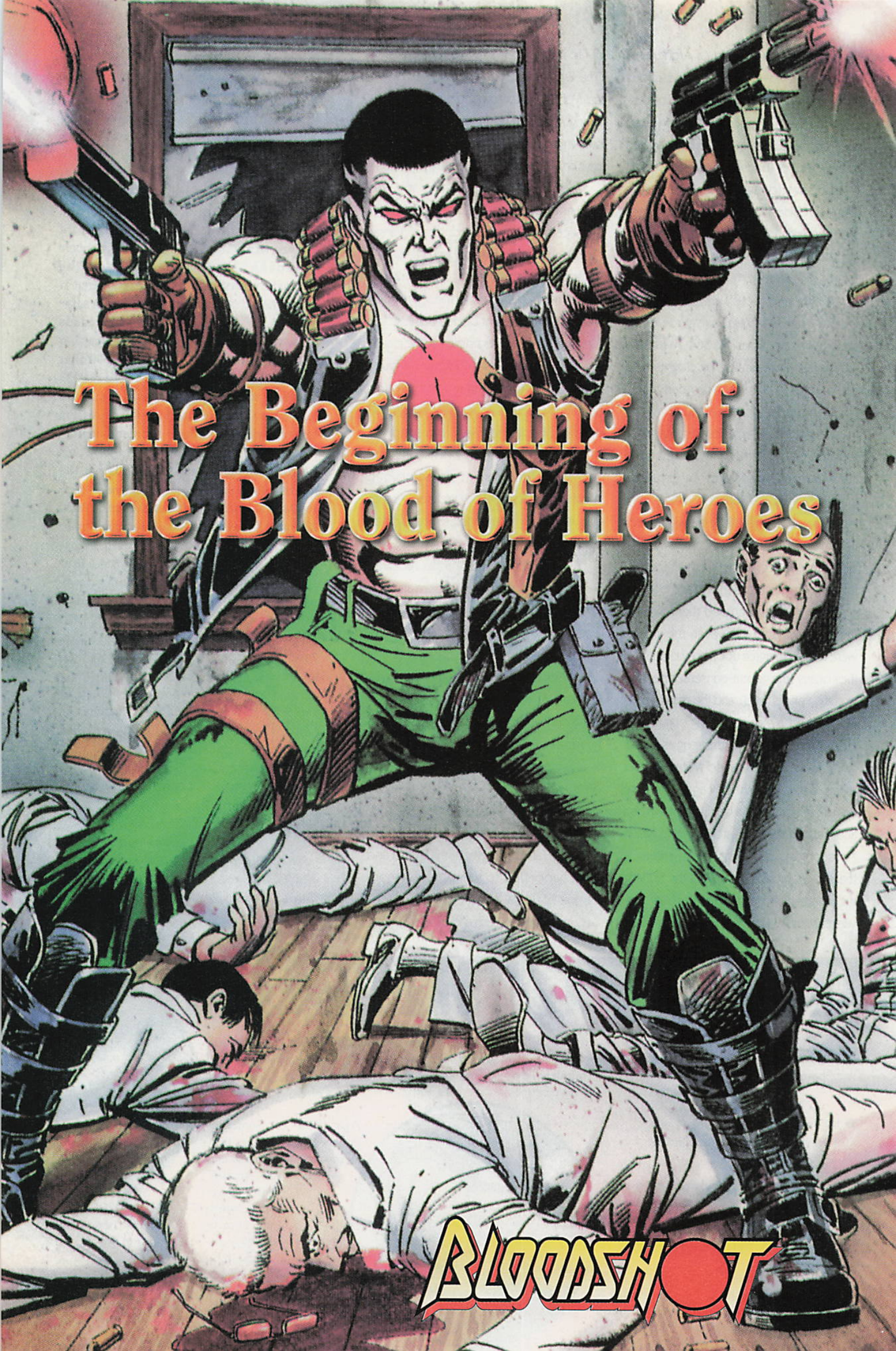
Mar 1992 Archer leaves the monastery at Ladakh.

Apr 1992 Archer and Armstrong meet.

2005 Flamingo and Archer are married.

Sometime after 2005, Archer founds the "Archies" Peace Movement, which will eventually have far-reaching effects.

Mar 2020 Archer dies rescuing Armstrong from the clutches of Harada.


The Beginning of the Blood of Heroes
BLOODSHOT

The man now known as Bloodshot has become one of the world's greatest champions, but before he became a hero, he had been a successful criminal. That criminal was named Angelo Mortalli, and up-and-coming "goodfella" who worked for the Mafia Don named Benito Carboni in New York's Little Italy. Mortalli had a bright future ahead of himself in the Mafia. He was engaged to be married to the daughter of high-ranking Mafioso Gino Canelli, and he displayed an eagerness to tackle the toughest jobs, if it meant moving up in the mafia's ranks.

His success seemed assured after he apparently succeeded in eliminating Gilad Abrams, the Eternal Warrior, who had been plaguing the New York Mafia scene for quite some time. Carboni was greatly pleased by this, but his lieutenant Canelli discovered that Mortalli was cheating on his daughter, and this he would not tolerate. Canelli had Mortalli framed for the murder, but he made a deal to turn state's evidence in exchange for a new life and identity.

Mortalli did end up getting a new life, but it wasn't exactly what he was hoping for. One of the government agents protecting him sold him out, and he ended up as a test subject at Project Rising Spirit. The Project, a part of Hideyoshi Iwatsu's Iwatsu Corporation, was trying to create programmable killing machines by replacing the blood in the human body with a synthetic plasma containing nanites, which were microscopic computers. The nanite infusion process gave the test subjects greater strength, speed, and agility, the ability to heal quickly from wounds, and a knowledge of all forms of combat. Even more amazingly, the nanites could be used to control nearby machines.

Mortalli's memory was erased, and he was subjected to the nanite infusion process. He was later liberated from the project by Geoff the Geomancer, who had learned about the existence of Bloodshot during Unity, using Erica Pierce's computers from the future.

Although his memories were completely gone, Bloodshot still retained something of his personality, and that somehow drove him to seek revenge on the people who had taken his identity from him, while trying to reclaim his lost past.

GETTING EVEN

Bloodshot's investigations into his past first led him to mobster Gino Canelli. Bloodshot trailed Canelli to London, where the mobster was coordinating a guns-for-drugs deal with Irish terrorists. Canelli got away after Bloodshot had chopped the fingers off of his right hand, and by the time Canelli had returned to New York, the mob had deduced that the mysterious man asking questions and interfering with their affairs was the former Angelo Mortalli.

But back in London, it was Bloodshot's other nemesis, the Iwatsu Corporation, who had interfered with his capture of Canelli. Iwatsu's Musashi Labs, which was the Japanese equivalent of their American Project Rising Spirit branch, had succeeded in creating what they called Speedshots. Like Bloodshot, the Speedshots were enhanced with nanite-infused blood, but the process greatly reduced their lifespans, and it did not endow them with the ability to control machines. Bloodshot was Iwatsu's greatest success, and they wanted him back. Hideyoshi Iwatsu dispatched two of his Speedshots to capture Bloodshot.

The Speedshots were no match for Bloodshot, but when he returned to New York, he encountered other difficulties. Bloodshot was attacked by Ax and his group of bionically-enhanced henchmen. Even though Ax possesses a machine-controlling ability similar to Bloodshot's, he and his group couldn't stand up to Bloodshot's superior fighting skills. Ax retreated from the fray after Bloodshot severed his left arm, vowing to exact revenge on Bloodshot one day for the loss of his arm.

These delays gave Canelli time to orchestrate his revenge against Bloodshot for the loss of his fingers. With the cooperation of the mob, Canelli hired a girl to play Angelo Mortalli's sister, and then sent Bloodshot a message demanding that he surrender himself in exchange for his sister's freedom. Bloodshot reluctantly agreed, and in the company of the Eternal Warrior, faced the mob bosses of New York to decide his future.

After considerable debate, the mobsters concluded that Bloodshot was too dangerous to them to be allowed to live. Under the threat of his sister's death, Bloodshot agreed to submit quietly if she was allowed to walk away. But as she was leaving, Gino Canelli pulled a gun and shot her.

Enraged, Bloodshot proceeded to tear through the mobsters in the room, until finally, mob boss Benito Carboni agreed to a truce

Project Rising Spirit's Crown Jewel: Bloodshot

HERO BEHIND THE SCENES: NEVILLE ALCOTT

Wherever forces are fighting for the cause of good in the Valiant Universe, there's a fair chance they are doing so at the behest of the enigmatic Neville Alcott. Neville works for an as-yet unrevealed international intelligence agency which appears to be headquartered in London, England. He maintains an office in London, and his organization also has a vast complex secreted under London's Heathrow Airport.

A longtime friend of Gilad (the Eternal Warrior) Abrams, the two first met in 1940, when Neville was a soldier at the battle of Dunkirk. Not knowing of the Eternal Warrior's great strength and durability, Neville risked his life when Gilad appeared to be in danger. Neville lost the use of his legs as a result, and Gilad afterward befriended his courageous comrade.

The details of Neville's career between that time and now are sketchy, but it is known that he has worked with Colin (Ninjak) King's father in Japan at some point, and that he knew Ninjak as a boy. Furthermore, an as-yet unrevealed past encounter with Dr. Silk cost him the life of his wife.

Often working out of London with his daughter Jillian, Neville frequently enlists the aid of the Eternal Warrior and Bloodshot for covert missions. He has also recently acquired the services of former MI-5 agent Charles Sinclair to act as his field ops commander. To counter the ever-escalating threats to world peace by organizations such as WEBNET, Neville will soon add the services of the new Secret Weapons to his arsenal.

between the mob and Bloodshot. It was ultimately revealed that the woman being held was not Bloodshot's sister at all, but merely another part of Canelli's elaborate scheme of revenge.

Having spent his fury against Iwatsu and the mob, Bloodshot decided it was time to make a new life for himself. At the urging of the Eternal Warrior, who had become his closest friend, Bloodshot became an agent for the mysterious Neville Alcott, who runs a covert organization that fights the forces of evil all over the world.

With superhuman speed, fighting skills and stamina, Bloodshot is a tough adversary

A NEW DIRECTION

Taking the name Michael Lazarus to start his new life, Bloodshot began his career as an agent for Neville Alcott. His first case for Neville involved players that Bloodshot was already familiar with, the agents of the Weaponeer. Like thousands of people around the world, Bloodshot had been getting his weaponry from these white-clad agents. Their organization could supply any weapons that were already made, and craft others to the buyer's specifications. For some unknown reason, someone was killing these agents and stealing some plans they were transporting. After investigating, Bloodshot discovered that a pair of Harbingers named Cinder and Glyder were behind the killing and thefts. He and a mysterious purple-clad ninja named Ninjak put an end to Cinder and Glyder's shenanigans, and Ninjak rigged the helicopter the pair was escaping in to explode.

But this victory did not stop the attacks on the agents of the Weaponeer. One shipment of vital missile components for Land-Air missiles with a special anti-detection program was hijacked before being delivered to Neville Alcott's secret underground base below Heathrow Airport in London. Alcott's organization finally determined that Dr. Silk and WEBNET were behind the attacks on the Weaponeer, and Bloodshot hastened to protect the few remaining Weaponeer agents, to insure the delivery of schematics for the missing missile components.

Silk got the best of Neville and Bloodshot this time. He blew up a plane containing an agent with the missile schematics, and tricked Bloodshot into leading WEBNET agents to the safehouse where Neville was guarding the remaining Weaponeer agents. With the exception of Ninjak, the Weaponeer organization was wiped out completely.

Furthermore, as Bloodshot later discovered, Cinder and Glyder survived their helicopter explosion. The bungled job had cost the pair precious status with their employer Dr. Silk. For that and for the scar the explosion had caused on Glyder's face, the two plotted their revenge against Bloodshot. They are simply not in Bloodshot's league, however, and both were badly injured in the encounter.

It seemed that Silk's influence extended everywhere. Bloodshot encountered Silk's agent Mohammed Mekkei in league with child pornographer and self-styled "Soul Eater" Emil Sosa. This evil pair conspired to kidnap Neville's daughter

Jillian and ransom her for intelligence information from Neville. However, Jillian was not as helpless as she seemed to be. While she flung Mekkel out of a window to his apparent death, Bloodshot's nanites caused Sosa's soul-eating Harbinger power to feed back on itself, thus leading to his death as well.

Undaunted by the seemingly infinite reach of Dr. Silk, Neville has gathered together Bloodshot, the Eternal Warrior, and Geoff McHenry for their most critical mission yet. Before the Weaponeer's organization was destroyed, it had been manufacturing a very special group of weapons for Omen Enterprises (which, unknown to Neville, controls the H.A.R.D. Corps). The cache of weapons is secreted someplace known as the Vault. Neville desperately wants to get his hands on the contents before Dr. Silk does.

After retrieving the mysterious weapons secreted in the Vault, Bloodshot will face even greater trials. "Events are set in motion that cause Bloodshot to actually be shot and go into a coma," according to *Bloodshot* writer Kevin VanHook. "It is very Kennedyesque, in the sense that he is riding bodyguard to an ambassador in a small country divided by civil war. He is to protect this ambassador going to a peace conference. The bullet is meant for the ambassador, but Bloodshot's reflexes are so fast that he blocks the bullet, but is struck in the head and put into a coma."

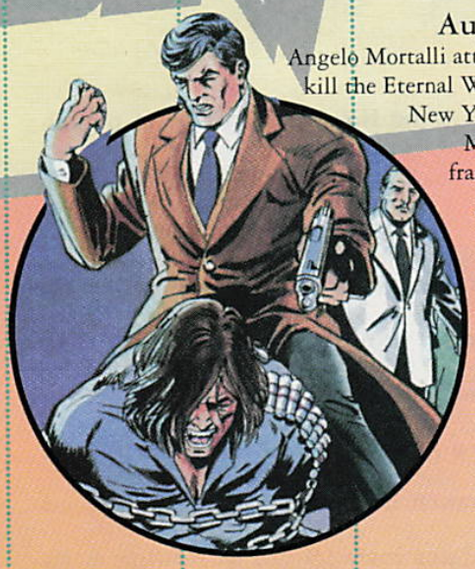
Astute readers will recall that there is an organization in the Valiant Universe which keeps an eye out for combat-experienced people who have fallen into comas. "The next issue, along come characters who are looking for anybody who is able-bodied, yet in a coma, that they can recruit: the H.A.R.D. Corps," says VanHook. "They have seen him before, and think he has no Harbinger powers (Bloodshot was blocking their equipment during the last encounter. Bloodshot is a latent Harbinger, which is why he doesn't burn out on the nanites.). So we'll have a story in which the H.A.R.D. Corps try and recruit him.

"Moving on from there, we are going to introduce a new character who was largely created by Don Perlin, called Uzi the Clown. He is a vigilante who sees things purely in black and white. Very disgruntled. Very macabre because he has the facade of a clown, and yet has this skintight black suit with a grinning skull on it.

"There are people who compared Bloodshot to other vigilante-type characters when he first came out," VanHook continues. "We see now after reading it for a year that he is a very different character. He does have feelings and emotions, and he cares about what happens. Even though he may be a very violent character, he still feels the ramifications of his actions, and this new character Uzi doesn't. So Bloodshot will actually see the darker side of what he could be like."

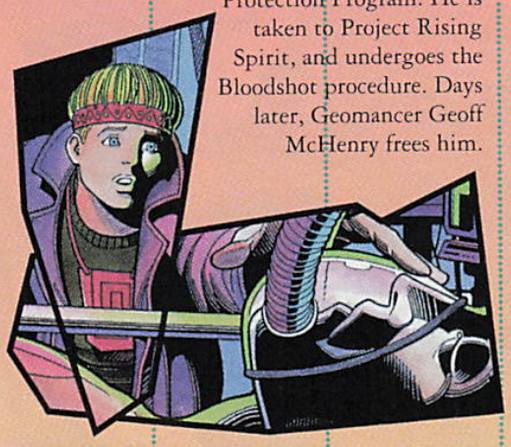
bloodshot timeline

Aug 1991
Angelo Mortalli attempts to kill the Eternal Warrior in New York City. Mortalli is framed for a gangland slaying.



Feb 1992
Mortalli is convicted of murder, and sentenced to life in prison.

Nov 1992
Mortalli is sold out by an agent protecting him for the Witness Protection Program. He is taken to Project Rising Spirit, and undergoes the Bloodshot procedure. Days later, Geomancer Geoff McHenry frees him.



June 1993
Bloodshot joins Neville Alcott's organization, and begins using the name Michael Lazarus.

Nov 1993
Bloodshot is unable to prevent WEBNET from wiping out the Weaponeer organization.

Jun 2028
Bloodshot is killed by Ax, who apparently takes the Blood of Heroes out of him.

You Can't Kill A Man Born to Die

The H.A.R.D. Corps is an organization operated by the Omen Enterprises cartel, an international partnership of companies which have banded together with the aim of opposing Toyo Harada and the Harbinger Foundation. Short for Harbinger Active Resistance Division Corps, the H.A.R.D. Corps branch of Omen employs enhanced operatives and maintains installations worldwide in its struggle to keep the Harbinger Foundation in check.

The field operatives of H.A.R.D. Corps have come to be members of the Corps through very special circumstances. Most have come from a background which has included training in combat and/or covert activities, such as police or military duty, or similar experience. Furthermore, each agent was saved from a coma by H.A.R.D. Corps surgeons through the use of advanced implants. Given the choice between serving as a H.A.R.D. Corps operative to pay for the expen-

sive surgery and implants, or having the procedure reversed, most candidates have naturally opted to become part of the Corps (not much of a choice, if you ask us).

The neural implants used to revive the recipients from comas also function as deadly weapons. They enable the user to mimic Harbinger powers, one at a time, through signals broadcast from a base station. These artificial Harbinger powers are developed by scanning the genetic matrix of natural Harbingers, whose powers can then be added to the Harbinger Powers Data Base equipment. Therefore, the powers that H.A.R.D. Corps field agents can access grows as the Corps is able to examine actual Harbingers, but some of the basic powers currently in common use include invulnerability, shields, flight, and strength.

To insure that field agents—known as "psi-borgs"—don't go rogue or fall into enemy hands, each is also implanted with a cerebral failsafe, euphemistically known as a "brain-pop", which will be activated automatically, causing brain functions to cease. The brain-pop can also be engaged manually by control liasons.

The original group of H.A.R.D. Corps field operatives was formed from fighter pilots who came to H.A.R.D. Corps through unknown circumstances. Additional agents have been acquired through the use of the extensive resources of Omen Enterprises, which constantly monitors medical facilities worldwide for likely candidates.

H.A.R.D. Corps in Action

As planned, the H.A.R.D. Corps members spend most of their energy gathering intelligence about and countering the activities of Toyo Harada, the Harbinger Foundation owner. One recent mission against a Harbinger Foundation Data Bunker proved fruitless, however, when the data disk that was recovered—which was supposed to contain information relating to Omega Harbingers—proved to have a "rom-burst" homing pulse, which allowed Harada's Eggbreakers to home in on the H.A.R.D. Corps facility in the Nevada desert.

A later attack on a heavily-defended Harbinger Foundation ship proved more successful. Harada was using the ship to transport billions of dollars worth of gold, with which he intended to "buy" the country of Estonia. He then intended to move the Harbinger Foundation there, and since he'd be in control of the entire country, the Foundation would be virtually invulnerable to attack.

Although the H.A.R.D. Corps was able to sink his ship and all of the gold in it, Harada attempted to proceed with his plan by starting up an aerospace factory in the country to produce jobs and cash flow there, thus garnering the influence he needed to control the tiny nation. The H.A.R.D. Corps countered this plan by infiltrating and destroying the aerospace factory.

The H.A.R.D. Corps has also recently interrupted a Harbinger breeding program in Iowa, and assaulted the Harbinger Starstep facility near Vancouver, but Toyo Harada is not the only enemy of the Corps. The Corps has mixed it up with some of the major villains of the Valiant Universe, such as the Spider Aliens, bionisaurs, and even Dr. Silk's WEBNET, but perhaps the most interesting nemesis the team has faced is the mysterious entity known only as the Other Man.

The Other Man is a shape-changing creature that appears to be made of a substance that resembles ectoplasm. Normal tactics of combat are virtually useless against this creature, as he can reform himself even after suffering considerable damage. He can also use his uncanny abilities to "flow" through small spaces, thus eluding capture. However, the H.A.R.D. Corps was able to defeat him in one confrontation by detonating a grenade after sticking it inside his malleable body. Interestingly, H.A.R.D. Corps has learned that the Other Man attacked Harbinger installations as well as their own. The Other Man's actual agenda is as of yet unknown.

H.A.R.D. Corps Personnel

Major Charles Palmer—codename: Gunslinger. The Squadron Leader of the H.A.R.D. Corps field team. A veteran of the Vietnam War, Gunslinger spent time in Vietnamese and Cambodian prison camps. Gunslinger owns and operates a small private airline called Palmer Air when he's not busy with H.A.R.D. Corps. A member of the initial H.A.R.D. Corps group.

Captain Marion Virgil Peeves—codename: Hammerhead. A veteran of the Vietnam War, Hammerhead spent a lot of time in Vietnamese and Cambodian prison camps. The experience was an embittering one for him, and he sometimes acts with prejudice toward people of Asian descent as a result. Hammerhead owns the "Gun Room", an indoor range and retail outlet in Denver, Colorado. A member of the initial H.A.R.D. Corps group, his nickname is obviously due to the numerous battle scars found on his head.

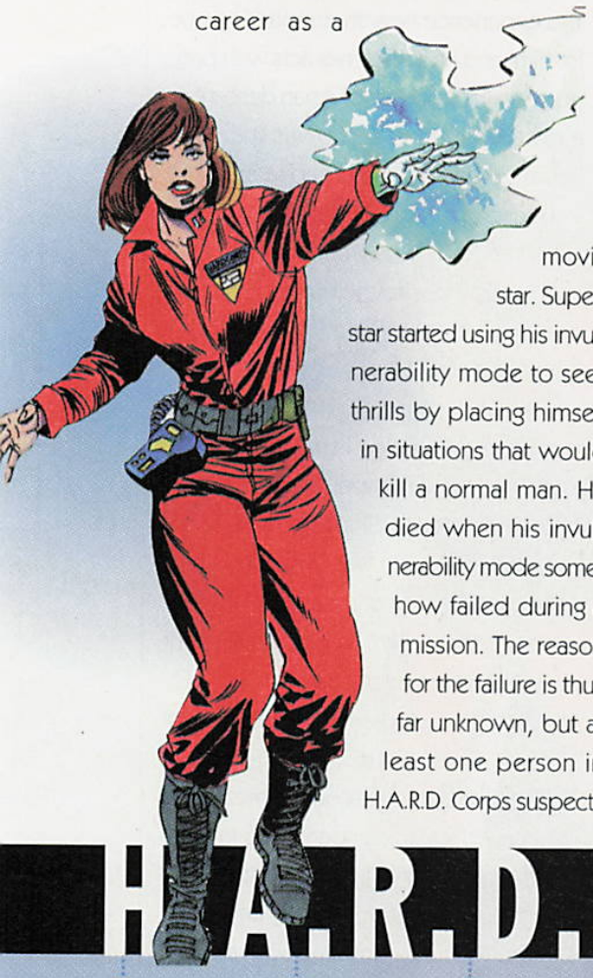
Captain Aaron Brillstein—codename: Shakespeare. Shakespeare is an urban intellectual, but that does little to alter his effectiveness in combat. Like Gunslinger and Hammerhead, Shakespeare is a veteran of the Vietnam War, where he spent a lot of time in prison camps. He now co-owns the Desert Shade, a restaurant specializing in French cuisine in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A member of the initial H.A.R.D. Corps group.

Lieutenant Jan Chabosky—codename: Maniac (deceased). Maniac spent time in Vietnam, much of it in prison camps, with Shakespeare, Hammerhead, and Gunslinger. Maniac's hotheaded lust for a good fight cost him his life in a H.A.R.D. Corps raid on a Harbinger Foundation data bunker. He was caught off guard during a fight against the mammoth Eggbreaker Big Boy, and before he died at the hands of the Harbinger, his "brain-pop" sequence was activated, killing him. A member of the initial H.A.R.D. Corps group.

Sam Yoon Kim—codename: Flatline. A policeman from Korea with undercover experience who had recently moved to the U.S., Flatline slipped into a coma after a 9 mm bullet opened his skull during the L.A. riots. He agreed to join H.A.R.D. Corps after being brought out of his coma by them, but he does not like the situation he's trapped in, and often questions the ethics and motivations of Omen. When he was

allowed to visit his wife following his acceptance of H.A.R.D. Corps status, he discovered that she had returned to Korea, assuming he was dead.

Ricky Silver—codename: Superstar (deceased). Superstar was the star of action films such as *Hard to Mangle*, before a motorcycle accident put him in a coma. After he became a H.A.R.D. Corps member, he began to get depressed because the incident had ended his career as a movie star. Superstar started using his invulnerability mode to seek thrills by placing himself in situations that would kill a normal man. He died when his invulnerability mode somehow failed during a mission. The reason for the failure is thus far unknown, but at least one person in H.A.R.D. Corps suspects their director, Mr. Heydrich!



Lieutenant Chris Eastman—codename: Hotshot. Eastman was a trainee in an Army special program until a questionable "accident" put her in a coma, which made her H.A.R.D. Corps material. Hotshot was the leader of the H.A.R.D. Corps rookie "B-Team", which consisted of herself, Perp, and Wipeout. That team was forced to go on a mission when H.A.R.D. Corps temporarily went AWOL, and although that mission failed, Hotshot proved that she had excellent leadership capabilities. She was made a full H.A.R.D. Corps member shortly thereafter. As her nickname implies, Hotshot is a crack shot with a handgun.

Ellen (last name unrevealed)—codename: Softcore. As the senior control liaison for H.A.R.D. Corps, Softcore operates the H.A.R.D. Corps' Harbinger Powers Database, a bank of computers and other equipment which allows field agents to simulate Harbinger powers. Softcore communicates with field agents through the radio headsets that they all wear, and switches their powers among the various abilities available upon their request. She usually operates from the hidden underground H.A.R.D. Corps facility near Albuquerque, New Mexico. However, when the situation demands it, she can monitor and regulate the H.A.R.D. Corps from other facilities, or even from a mobile command center. When psiborg field agents go on separate missions, other control personnel such as Safeguard and Lifeline act as their liaisons.

Mr. Heydrich—Serves as the director of H.A.R.D. Corps for the Omen Cartel. Heydrich gives the H.A.R.D. Corps members their missions, and determines when to terminate rogue or missing field agents, to keep the H.A.R.D. Corps technology from falling into enemy hands. The members of the Corps have often questioned his decisions and motivations, and many of them have their doubts about him.

Seth (last name unrevealed)—A trainer at H.A.R.D. Corps' Albuquerque facility. He puts the team through their paces when they're not on missions. ☆

H.A.R.D. corps timeline

1991
Omen begins to develop the H.A.R.D. Corps.

Apr 1992
H.A.R.D. Corps temporarily captures Sting and his group of rogue Harbingers in order to add their powers to the Harbinger Powers Database.

Dec 1992
Maniac is killed by the Eggbreaker Big Boy during a raid on a Harbinger Data Bunker. Flatline joins the Corps.

1993
Hotshot graduates from the "B-Team" to full H.A.R.D. Corps status.
H.A.R.D. Corps encounters the Other Man.
Superstar is killed while rescuing Flatline from a Harbinger facility in Iowa.

Nov 2989
As the Harbinger War concludes, the H.A.R.D. Corps leaves Earth in starships. They thereafter refuse to respond to any attempted communication from Earth.

CONTEST

TRIVIA TIME!

The entire Valiant Universe awaits your grasp in this issue. Every regular-issue Valiant comic can be won; it's up to you to use your knowledge of the Valiant Universe to receive big, big stuff! In the third contest in this special, your knowledge of Valiant trivia is a must!

Here's your questions:

1. Who did Buck McHenry train as a Geomancer before Geoff?
2. Name the gun-toting Goph who is a member of the Future Force, and a friend of Magnus.
3. Name the ally of Magnus who turns into a monstrous purple berkerker when he becomes upset.
4. Who was the first team member to die in H.A.R.D. Corps #1?
5. Who wrote the *Book of the Geomancers*?
6. How many days did Unity last?
7. What is Archer's first name?
8. On what starship did I-A serve?

entries due by June 30

Grand Prize (One winner)

One lucky trivia whiz will win an entire run of *Shadowman* [#1 through #26], including issue #8, featuring the awesome first appearance of the nefarious M aster Darque!

Second Prize (One winner)

One fan will the entire run of *Eternal Warrior* [#1 through #23], a fine addition to any collection!

Third Prize (Five winners)

Five lucky winners will receive a complete run [#1 through #8] of *The Second Life of Doctor Mirage*, with the 1 issue signed by series artist Bernard Chang!

Name: _____

Age: _____ Phone : _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your Comic Store's Name: _____

Store Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

A N S W E R S

1) _____ 5) _____

2) _____ 6) _____

3) _____ 7) _____

4) _____ 8) _____

Contest Rules

Fill in the blanks pertaining to each panel (with title, issue number and penciller, place the coupon in an envelope, and mail it to:

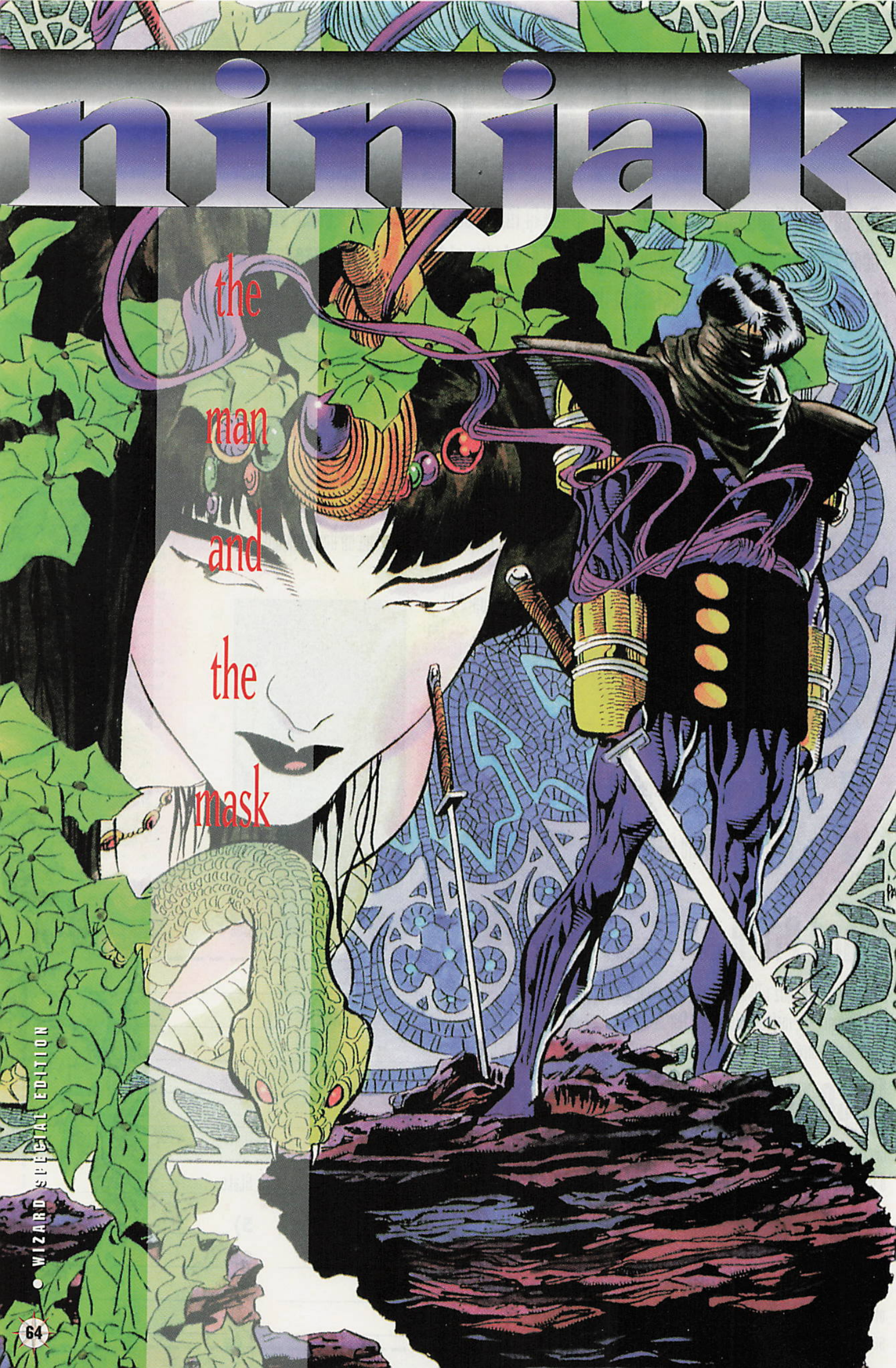
Valiant Contest #3
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and Paul Fairchild. On the coupon please print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, the name and address of the store where you purchase comics, and the panel information, and place the completed coupon in an envelope. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Valiant Contest #3, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994. The random drawing will be conducted on July 1, 1994, by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after July 4, 1994, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Valiant Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920.

ninjak

the man and the mask



English-born Colin King is one of the world's richest men, but his great wealth is not his most interesting attribute. King is also known as Ninjak, a mercenary and covert operative formerly associated with the international arms distributor known as the Weaponeer.

The Weaponeer had a worldwide network of operatives through which he distributed all types of weapons, from swords and handguns on up to nuclear warheads. He also had the facilities and expertise to create customized weapons to the buyer's specifications, if necessary. These skills generated a large demand for the Weaponeer's services around the world.

But someone began to kill the agents of the Weaponeer. When Ninjak investigated these assassinations, he found that Dr. Silk was behind them. Silk felt that the Weaponeer organization was too dangerous to ignore, but too difficult to control—especially as he was about to begin his Operation Black Water. Through his own international terrorist organization called WEBNET, Silk managed to virtually wipe out the Weaponeer organization—except for Ninjak.

Operation Black Water was a plan to sell the secret of Black Water—the nanite-induced cold fusion of hydrogen and oxygen into water—to any country that would pay the price. Using Black Water, a country could make its deserts fertile, or turn its enemy's land into an ocean. Ninjak managed to wrest the secret of Black Water away from Silk, destroying his concealed base and its Black Water reactor in the process.

After the Black Water saga, readers will learn a little more about the mysterious ninja, confides *Ninjak* writer Mark Moretti. "In *Ninjak* #3 and #4, we start to find out a little bit about Ninjak's past as he is recruited by Neville Alcott, who has actually known him since he was a boy. It has to do with his father's involvement with Neville Alcott years ago in Japan, where Ninjak—Colin King—was raised as a boy. He spent the formative years of his childhood there. His father was in the Navy, and was moved around quite a bit in the late '50s and early '60s."

Moretti reveals that Colin King was considering hanging up his purple tights after the Black Water ordeal. "But Neville puts the old hook in him," the writer says. "He pulls him right back into it with something Ninjak can't resist: his long-lost love, the woman he was involved with in Japan. He has to go back there because her family is in trouble. It has to do with the current political situation in Japan, in which the old government was pushed out in the past two years because of the tremendous corruption that was going on. The new government is having problems now, too. It is under siege by the underworld there, who are getting cut out of the picture now; they really want their piece of the pie back. Ninjak has to go there and find the people behind this, and basically put them out of commission. They are threatening the family of his former love, who are involved in the political end of it."

Ninjak will quickly find that there are advantages to working for the mysterious Mr. Alcott. Moretti continues: "Once he gets involved with Neville, and they start outfitting him with all these toys, all of a sudden he doesn't have to do everything himself anymore. He has access to a tremendous amount of things that he didn't have before. It becomes like a game to him in a way, because he really doesn't have any other reason to do it other than what got him going, which we will show in *Ninjak* #0."

"When Ninjak comes back from Japan, he ends up getting involved with X-O," says Moretti. "We find out that someone is trying to usurp Orb Industries out from under Aric. Again, it is Dr. Silk, with his motto [that states] anything that can't be controlled needs to be destroyed. First, he tries to get Orb Industries. Dr. Silk will realize he can't get Orb Industries from Aric, so he wants to destroy it.

"In issue #7, Ninjak is leaving this country to go back to England. It is a one-issue storyline that I think is really going to be a lot of fun, because 90% of it takes place on an airplane. An international assassin has been hired to eliminate the Secretary of State. He is a tremendous assassin, but no one knows what he looks like because he is a master of disguise. His plot to assassinate the Secretary of State actually fails, and he tries to get out of the country. Ninjak goes to the airport and spots this guy, and follows him aboard the plane. He suddenly realizes this guy isn't someone who is just trying to escape; he wants to kill everybody on that plane with a bomb, and he will parachute out before it goes off. Ninjak's job here is to stop this guy and save these people," Moretti says.

"Then we are going to get into Chaos Effect in #8, and as far as #9, #10 and #11 go, [these issues have] to do with the President of the United States, and I don't want to give that away yet. It has to do with technology. It is something that actually exists out there right now, and if anyone were to use it the wrong way, you could do some really crazy stuff."

Moretti reports that *Ninjak* #0, the hero's origin story, will come out at about this point in the progression of the series. "*Ninjak* #0 will trace Dr. Silk's origin, also," he adds. "Dr. Silk starts out in 1942, and Ninjak comes along 18 years later—between 1960 and 1961. It is interesting to see where they came from and what made them who they are, and how things that influence you at different times can have radically different effects. It will really give you the background of all the little things about why Ninjak behaves the way he behaves, who his parents were, where he is going, and what his motivation is; including how he got involved with Dr. Silk. Silk and Ninjak are not dopplegangers like Batman and the Joker, or anything like that. It will be an interesting look at how two people who have some similarities can go completely different ways." ☆

Colin King, a.k.a. Ninjak, is a weapons master as well as a deductive whiz.

NINJAK TIMELINE

1942
Dr. Augustus Silk is born in Chicago.

1967
Dr. Silk earns a degree from Harvard Medical School, and joins the Salk Institute.

1977
Silk and Dr. Marcus Bodine form Comsat Industries.

1985
Dr. Silk takes complete control of Comsat.

1988
Comsat becomes a front for WEBNET.

Nov 1993
Dr. Silk destroys the Weaponeer organization.

CONTEST

H.A.R.D. WORDS!

THE ENTIRE VALIANT UNIVERSE AWAITS YOUR GRASP IN THIS ISSUE. EVERY REGULAR-ISSUE VALIANT COMIC CAN BE WON; IT'S UP TO YOU TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE VALIANT UNIVERSE TO RECEIVE BIG, BIG STUFF! IN THE FOURTH CONTEST IN THIS SPECIAL, YOUR ABILITY TO UNSCRAMBLE WORDS, FOLLOWING A SMALL CLUE, CAN LEAD TO YOUR WINNING SOME COOL STUFF!

What Ya Gotta Do: What follows are six Valiant-related word jumbles. You must answer the jumbles, simply by unscrambling the scrambled answers we've given you. Then you have to take the highlighted letters in each answer, and unscramble them to reveal the final Valiant-related codeword. Good luck!

Unscramble these words

1. Dr. Silk's loyal assistant — I H F Z H U T G
2. Dr. Eclipse's real last name — R E E B N D
3. Darque's demonic sibling — R A N D S A I
4. Ninjak's real last name — N K I G
5. Maxim St. James was the first — W O M A N D A S H

VALIANT CODEWORD CLUE: The suicide ritual for Geomancers. (WRITE ANSWER ON COUPON)

Grand Prize (One winner)

One sharp Valiant reader will win a complete run of *Harbinger* [#0 through #30], with all coupon books intact! This includes the rare sendaway version of Harbinger #0!

Second Prize (One winner)

One smartie will win a complete run of *H.A.R.D. Corps* [#1 through #19], including the Gold Logo Version of #1!

Third Prize (Five winners)

Five lucky winners will receive a *Harbinger Trade Paperback*, an *X-O Manowar Trade Paperback*, a *Rai Trade Paperback*, a *Shadowman Trade Paperback* and a *Solar #0 Trade Paperback*! You can read almost the entire early history of the Valiant Universe with these books!

entries due by June 30

Name: _____

Age: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your Comic Store's Name: _____

Store Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

CONTEST #4 VALIANT CODEWORD

____ - ____

Contest Rules

Fill in the coupon, including the Valiant Codeword, and place the coupon in an envelope, and mail it to:

Valiant Contest #4
c/o Wizard Press
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Congers, NY 10920

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and Pat McCallum's cats. Print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, the name and address of the store where you purchase comics, and place completed coupon in an envelope. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Valiant Contest #4, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994. The random drawing will be conducted on July 1, 1994, by Wizard Press.

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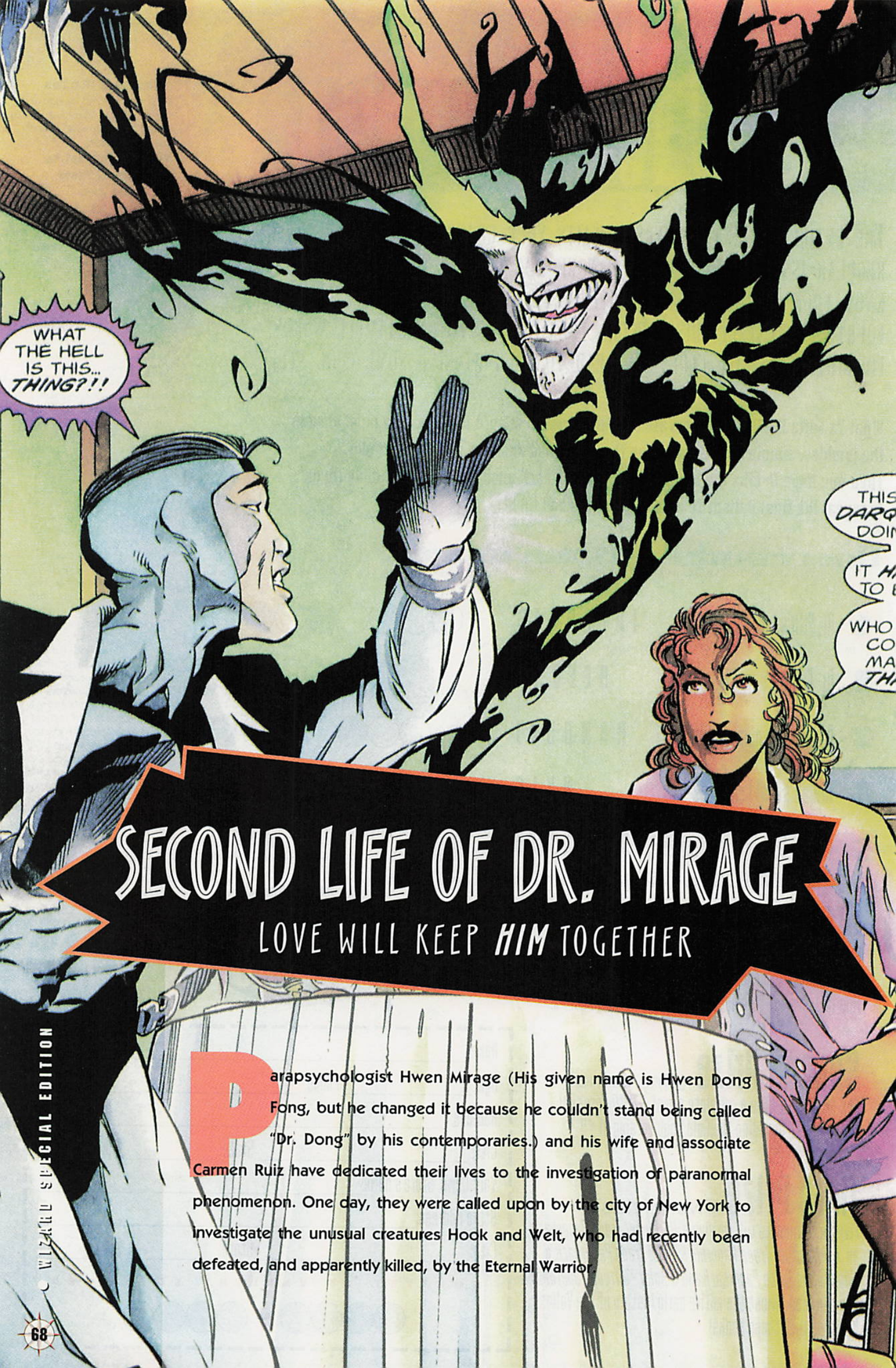


SECOND LIFE OF DR. MIRAGE

LOVE WILL KEEP *HIM* TOGETHER

Parapsychologist Hwen Mirage (His given name is Hwen Dong Fong, but he changed it because he couldn't stand being called "Dr. Dong" by his contemporaries.) and his wife and associate Carmen Ruiz have dedicated their lives to the investigation of paranormal phenomenon. One day, they were called upon by the city of New York to investigate the unusual creatures Hook and Welt, who had recently been defeated, and apparently killed, by the Eternal Warrior.

Their tests revealed the existence of a mysterious form of necromantic energy in the otherwise inert bodies of Hook and Welt. The probing also informed the source of that energy, Master Darque, that someone was tampering with the Darque Power. Darque reactivated his minions in an attempt to dispose of those who were foolish enough to encroach upon his forbidden knowledge. Mirage and Carmen were able to defeat Darque's undead henchmen by subjecting them to an electromagnetic pulse.

With the help of Darque's sister Sandria, Mirage and Carmen were able to trail Master Darque to a monastery in Ladakh, Tibet. Darque was intent on stealing the secrets of Geomancy there, but before he could do so, Carmen and Mirage rushed in on him. Darque attempted to convert Mirage's body into necromantic energy and absorb it into his body, but Mirage's will and his immense love for Carmen were strong. He burst forth from Darque's body, rendering Darque unconscious in the process. Unfortunately, he was still a being of pure necromantic energy—alive, but as intangible as a ghost.

Darque had unwittingly created his own worst enemy, for not only can Mirage now become invisible and manipulate other objects with his necromantic energy, but he can also neutralize Darque's own power while in close proximity to him. Additionally, he can sense the presence of other necromantic energy, such as that possessed by Darque's minions. Of course, his condition has its drawbacks, too. Mirage cannot turn back to a solid form, and that has been a source of frustration for him and his wife Carmen.

Although this situation seems to make Carmen an easy target for their enemies, she is far from a helpless victim. Having trained in the martial art of Capoeira since she was seven, Carmen can hold her own in almost any confrontation. When she's not battling necromantic monstrosities, she's building devices to detect them. Carmen uses her knowledge of engineering to construct the ghostbusting equipment that Hwen designs.

> "Hwen and Carmen's combination of powers and abilities has served them well in their investigations."

Hwen and Carmen's combination of powers and abilities has served them well in their investigations into the paranormal. The two investigated a necromantic bull in Wyoming before again encountering the machinations of their principal foe Master Darque. They later helped the Eternal Warrior prevent Master Darque from obtaining part of a set of 30 necromantically-powered silver coins.

The duo was also tricked by Master Darque into aiding him in a plan to save his sister Sandria from death. Sandria required a transfusion of necromantic energy to keep her from dissipating, which would have meant Darque's death as well. With the help of Dr. Mirage, Sandria was infused with energy that Shadowman collected by travelling through time. In exchange for his help, Darque had vowed to show Dr. Mirage how an intangible body could become solid again. Mirage did see Sandria become corporeal, but unfortunately, he did not gain the knowledge necessary to effect such a transformation upon himself.

However, *Second Life of Doctor Mirage* writer Bob Layton reveals that Mirage will eventually overcome his problem. "We are building up right now—dropping clues all along—on the nature of Hwen, the nature of his relationship to Carmen, and the nature of the relationship to Master Darque. Once he learns the parameters of his new world, he will extend beyond it. You will see, coming up in issues #11 and #12, a kind of culmination of the whole 'What happened to me, and why can't I eat soup?' scenario. We will find that there is an absolute parallel between Master Darque and Sandria, and Hwen and Carmen," Layton promises. "In order to be solid, he is going to need an enormous amount of necromantic energy, which he will use up once he is in mass form.

"I don't want to give away all the fun stuff in issue #11, but it is a riot, because he actually succeeds and becomes solid again, but not in any kind of way he wants," Layton continues. "And this is always the problem of necromatic energy; it is a force created by the lifeforce from a dying being. Where do you get this? Hang out at cemeteries and emergency rooms hoping to suck up a little bit of energy there? The most likely answer is you steal it from somebody who already has it: a bad guy. [This] gives him an automatic reason to get into conflict with Darque, because every time he steals energy from Darque, he goes and has sex with Carmen. I think that is a realistic motivation for a superhero."

"The other thing that I'm going to explore in the next year is I want Carmen

to become pregnant. We can have a little Mirage baby—what kind of baby it is going to be, I don't know. I haven't really thought [about it] yet—there is going to be some weird stuff, but I thought it would be fun to stay in the family a little bit. Perceptive readers have already figured out the book is about Carmen, and not really about Hwen.

"The thing about Mirage is that I realized early on that I really wanted to write a romantic comedy," Layton explains. "I really wanted to do something other than the standard hero, and much of what [appears in] *Mirage* comes from the relationship I have with my fiancée. Because it is a woman's book, I tried to gear it more for a female audience. The guys will enjoy it, but I really geared this toward the female audience."

In keeping with this effort to reach a broader audience, the Dr. Mirage title will feature an unusual crossover this year. "Walt Willey, who plays a character on *All My Children* will guest star in *Dr. Mirage* as himself," says Layton. "We have a little adventure where we are going to crossover with a soap opera, probably in issue #13. The character Walt is an actor who is a college friend of Carmen's, and winds up in a little trouble. Walt has a tattoo on his arm–some sort of Celtic symbol– and he is not even aware of what it is exactly. The neat part is that the real-life Walt has this tattoo! In the story, he doesn't know where it came from. He just woke up one night at college, and this thing was tattooed on his arm. Apparently, it is some sort of beacon for the supernatural, so he goes to his friend, Hwen Mirage. Hwen and Carmen and Walt then get to go on a little adventure."

Hwen Mirage and Carmen Ruiz (nice boots, guy).

Dr. Mirage timeline

May 1993
Dr. Mirage and Carmen convince Shadowman to help the New York police bring down a drug dealer.

Aug 1993
Dr. Mirage and Carmen get more than they bargained for when they investigate Darque's minions Hook and Welt in New York.

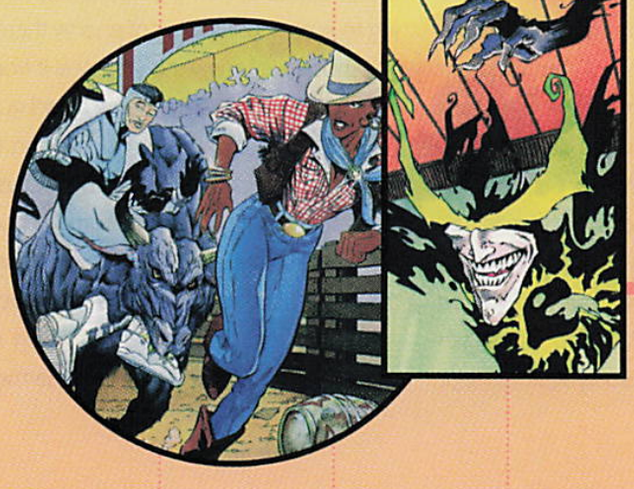
Sep 1993
Master Darque goes to the temple at Ladakh to seize the secrets of Geomancy from the bones of Tashi Khatun.

Hwen and Carmen end Darque's quest for the thirty pieces of silver.

Hwen and Carmen face the necromantic bull in Wyoming.

Dr. Mirage helps Master Darque retrieve Shadowman from a time portal.

Dr. Eclipse attempts to steal Hwen's power in Aspen.



SCRAMBLED HEADS!

THE ENTIRE VALIANT UNIVERSE AWAITS YOUR GRASP IN THIS ISSUE. EVERY REGULAR-ISSUE VALIANT COMIC CAN BE WON; IT'S UP TO YOU TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE VALIANT UNIVERSE TO RECEIVE BIG, BIG STUFF! IN THE FIFTH CONTEST IN THIS SPECIAL, YOUR ABILITY TO UNSCRAMBLE A PICTURE MAY WIN YOU SOME NEAT ITEMS!

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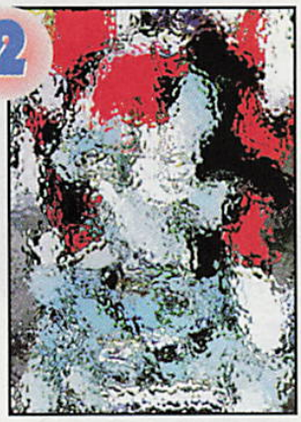
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WHAT YA GOTTA DO: IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE ARE SCRAMBLED-UP VERSIONS OF SIX VALIANT CHARACTERS. YOU MUST IDENTIFY ALL SIX CORRECTLY TO WIN.

entries due by June 30

Grand Prize (One winner)

One lucky fan will win a complete run of *Rai* and *Rai and the Future Force* [#0 through #22], including a Gold Logo version of *Rai and the Future Force* #9!

Second Prize (One winner)

One lucky fan will be the winner of a complete run of *Bloodshot* [#0 through #17], as well as a copy of *Rai* #0, Bloodshot's historic first appearance!

Third Prize (Five winners)

Five lucky winners will receive a copy of the Gold Logo version of *Bloodshot* #0, as well as the Gold Logo version of *Shadowman* #0!

Name: _____

Age: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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CONTEST #5 ANSWERS

1) _____ 4) _____

2) _____ 5) _____

3) _____ 6) _____

Contest Rules

Fill in the coupon, including the blanks pertaining to each scrambled character, and place the coupon in an envelope, and mail it to:

Valiant Contest #5
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No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and anyone whose first and last names both begin and end in Z. On the coupon, please print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, the name and address of the store where you purchase comics, and the contest answers, and place the completed coupon in an envelope. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Valiant Contest #5, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994. The random drawing will be conducted on July 1, 1994, by Wizard Press. For a list of winners, available after July 4, 1994, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Valiant Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920.

The Eternal Warrior has traditionally been the fist and steel aiding the Geomancers and Earth in their times of need, but the current Geomancer Geoff McHenry has also called upon other heroes to assist him in times of crisis. Two renegade harbingers—Livewire and Stronghold—have banded together with Geoff and various other Valiant heroes to help him defend the Earth against the forces that threaten it.

Geoff first assembled a Secret Weapons team to battle the menace of Doctor Eclipse. Eclipse was created by Master Darque, when he changed Doctor Solar's foe Fred Bender into a being of pure necromantic energy. Bender only wanted the power to gain revenge on Solar, but Master Darque planned to use him to bring a demon from beyond reality—Erica Pierce—to Earth. To prevent this, Geoff gathered together X-O Manowar, Bloodshot, the Eternal Warrior, Livewire, and Stronghold, while Shadowman arrived on his own to stop his old foe Darque. The Secret Weapons team foiled Darque's plan when Stronghold—who has the ablity to absorb other objects to increase his own mass—attempted to absorb Dr. Eclipse. This temporarily disabled Doctor Eclipse and spoiled Darque's ceremony.

After this successful mission, Geoff again contacted Livewire and Stronghold to help him save the Eternal Warrior from the clutches of the Iwatsu Corporation. Iwatsu wanted to learn the secret of eternal life by studying an immortal, so the corporation used its Speedshot agents to abduct Gilad. The nanite-enhanced Speedshots are not quite as effective as their more advanced "cousin" Bloodshot, but a group of them can be almost as deadly. With the help of Archer, Livewire and Stronghold were able to rescue the Eternal Warrior from their clutches.

Under Geoff's direction, both Livewire's ability to generate magnetic fields and Stronghold's mass-absorption powers have been used to fight evil the world over. They teamed with Ninjak to prevent an arms shipment from falling into the wrong

SECRET WEAPONS

hands in Estonia. Under the streets of New York, the Secret Weapons were aided by the Eternal Warrior, X-O Manowar, and Turok in a battle with a cluster of Spider Aliens.

But the team has not been without its problems. Prior to becoming Secret Weapons, Livewire and Stronghold had left the Harbinger Foundation to take control of their own lives, but they have had difficulty adjusting to life on their own. Compounding this problem, Stronghold was drugged by a deranged Harbinger Foundation employee, causing his powers to run wild. He began to absorb mass uncontrollably, destroying Livewire's apartment building and a good part of Brooklyn.

These problems will start catching up to the harbinger-powered pair, according to *Secret Weapons* writer Maurice Fontenot. "Because of the trouble that Livewire and Stronghold have caused, Gilad thinks that it is best that they go back to the Harbinger Foundation and continue their training there. Basically, he tells the Harbinger Foundation to come get them."

But the duo will not just disapear from the Valiant universe. "Livewire and Stronghold are going to go through some real dramatic changes," says Fontenot. "When the Harbinger Foundation had problem kids before, all they had to do was take them to Harada, and Harada could mind-wipe them. [These two characters return] before Toyo Harada comes back, so they will try some experimental research on Livewire and Stronghold. We are going to make Livewire into a villain, and we are going to turn Stronghold into a vegetable. I think Livewire is going to make a really powerful villain. With her electromagnetic powers, she could take on X-O."

After issue #8, *Secret Weapons* will take an exciting new direction. "After WEBNET destroyed the Weaponeers organization, the only thing left [was] a vault where the Weaponeer keeps all of his weapons and equipment," Fontenot notes. "*Secret Weapons* #9 and #10 is a race between WEBNET and Gilad, Bloodshot and Geoff trying to find this vault. They are working for Neville Alcott, and they want to find the vault before WEBNET gets to it."

"Unfortunately, every time they try to track it electronically, WEBNET can key in on that and go after them, so they are using Geoff as a bloodhound. He can locate the vault without any electronic help. They actually get to the vault, and find these special suits made by the Weaponeer for Omen Enterprises."

These suits will be worn by the new Secret Weapons. "They pick three suitable people to wear these suits, and they pick one other person who is already Neville's agent. His Harbinger ability is that he is bulletproof," explains Fontenot. "The others are named Mach, Sonar, and Paraman. Bloodshot will go on missions with them as well.

"The suits are really cool, because we are going to do some interesting stuff where there are actually consequences to [wearing] them; especially involving the team getting to learn them. They can injure themselves. Mach, who has very quick reflexes, dehydrates himself very quickly. They have to figure out a way to beat that. Sonar uses the power of sound to shatter objects, but she can get sick. She just vomits. So the suits have negative and positive [aspects] to them, and they are just kind of working out the bugs."

The new Secret Weapons will tackle their first mission in issue #11, when they will tackle the forces of WEBNET. "WEBNET has a satellite dish hidden somewhere in the world, and what they are doing is using it to beam up to satellites, [so they can] cut off communications to entire countries," explains Fontenot. "They are doing this to several countries for money or information. The Secret Weapons' first mission is to find this satellite dish. It is in a big boat that looks like an island, and I'm introducing a new villain whose name is Mr. Dunne. Because I like the whole island idea, I'm playing him as an evil Mr. Roarke—the Fantasy Island guy."

"In this first mission, Paraman gets killed. Charles Sinclair, who is also a character that has been featured in *Bloodshot*, is there as one of Neville's agents, as well. He has to don the suit during the battle to help [the Secret Weapons] fight off the WEBNET agents and destroy the satellite dish. What happens after that in *Secret Weapons* is actually Sinclair adjusting to being a superhero," Fontenot says, revealing that the series will have a human element, in addition to all the action.

"I like the character Sinclair, and I want to focus a little bit on him and do some interesting things with him. He has marital problems; he and his wife are on the brink of a divorce. He is a guy whose life is really screwed up at the moment, and actually getting in the suit and having adventures brings him more to life. He is finally finding meaning for his life." The mixture of all the lives of the new Secret Weapons should prove to be an interesting one. ☆

secret weapons timeline

June 1993
Sensing Fred Bender's transformation into Dr. Eclipse, Geoff assembles the first Secret Weapons team to battle the necromantic creature.

Aug 1993
The Eternal Warrior is kidnapped by Iwatsu's Speedshots. The Secret Weapons free him. Ninjak and the Secret Weapons prevent an arms shipment from falling into WEBNET hands.

Nov 1993
The Secret Weapons, Gilad, X-O, and Turok battle a colony of Spider Aliens under New York.

Jan 1994
Stronghold and Livewire are returned to the Harbinger Foundation by the Eternal Warrior.

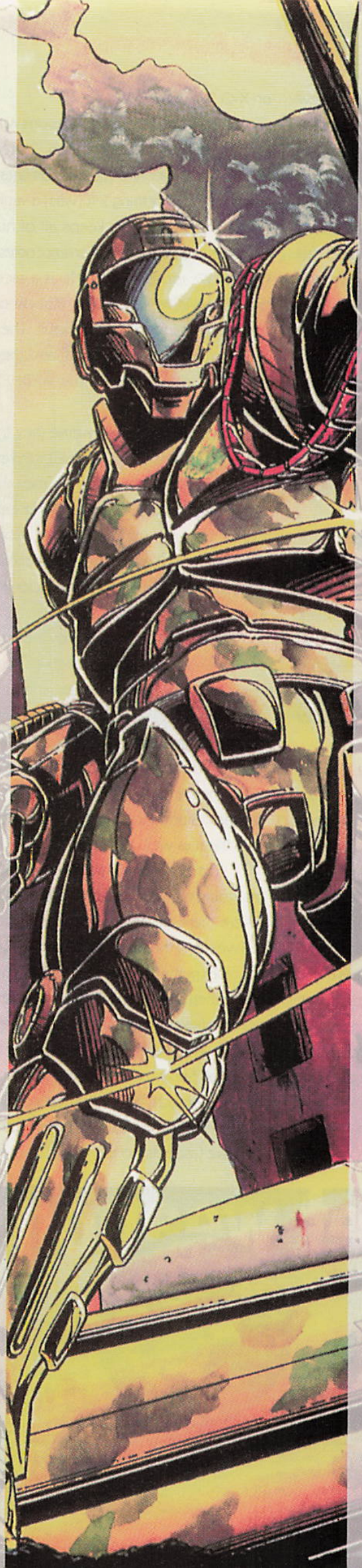
Apr 1994
The new Secret Weapons team is formed, featuring Bloodshot and three others.

ARMORINES

The Armorines began as a response by the U.S. Government to the perceived threat of the powerful alien X-O Manowar armor controlled by Aric Dacia. Under the leadership of CIA agent Peter Garrett and U.S. Marine Colonel Gardner, the United States Government had been investigating the existence of aliens on Earth for some time. After collecting a few examples of Spider Alien weaponry and modifying it for their own use, and also monitoring Aric's use of the X-O Manowar armor, the government determined that the armor was too powerful to be in anyone's hands but its own.

To that end, the government developed Project Deep Freeze, which was a plan to lure Aric to Antarctica, where he would be subdued and stripped of his armor. The X-O Manowar armor would then be taken to a U.S. Government base that had been built into a massive crater (which had been created during a clash between the Phil Seleski of another universe and the Doctor Solar which he had created from his subconscious).

Project Deep Freeze failed, but using the alien weaponry the government had already collected, and data gathered by examining the X-O Manowar armor, brilliant weapons technology expert Dr. Phillip Zahn developed the Armorines' battle-suits. These advanced battle-suits are worn by a group of four specially trained Marines, and each Armorine in the field has a "co-pilot" back at the base, who remotely controls certain aspects of the armor's functions.



This set-up makes the Armorines the finest combat unit the world has ever seen.

The Armorines in Action

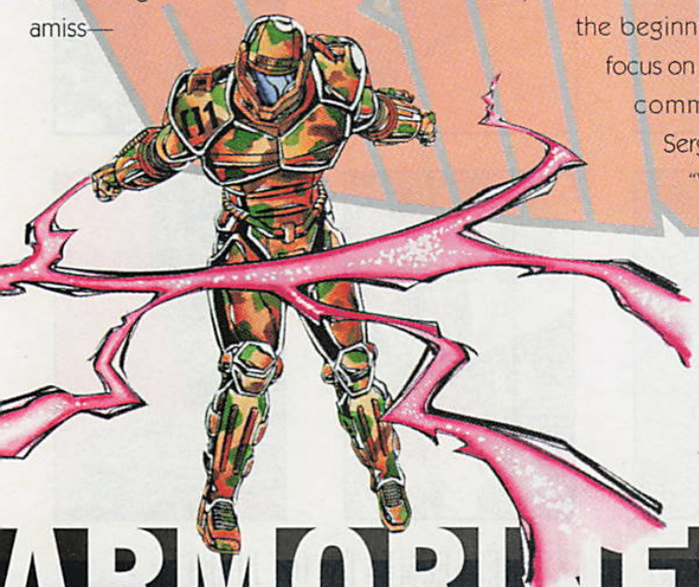
After his previous trouble with the U.S. Government at Project Deep Freeze, Aric arranged (through Harbinger head honcho Toyo Harada) a truce between himself and the government. However, because of the ordeal, he incurred the wrath of agent Garrett and his associate Ms. Mandrake of the IRS. Those two forged orders to Colonel Gardner directing the Armorines to attack Aric. The Armorines got the drop on Aric and might even have defeated him, but at the last minute, Colonel Gardner's superior General Kendall—realizing that something was amiss—ordered the mission aborted. Although innocent, Gardner was arrested for the incident.

Even without Aric as an opponent, the Armorines will find that there is plenty of Spider Alien technology in hostile hands on Earth. According to series writer Jorge González, the Armorines will encounter the Spider Aliens themselves in their first three-issue story arc. "They are basically sent down to investigate a Navy sub that was sunk, and they will discover that it is the Spider Aliens that have been taking down various subs and ships in preparation for this big gathering," González says.

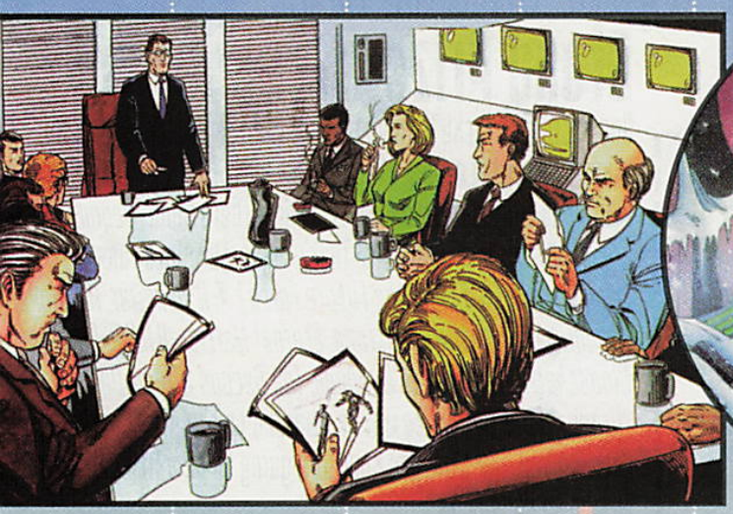
"After that, in between issues #3 and #5, there will be a quiet issue where we get to know more about the characters," González reveals, explaining that in the beginning, the series will focus on the Armorines' field commander, Gunnery Sergeant Harold Lewis. "We will reveal more about Gunny's past, and play out the relationship between Gunny and his co-pilot Myra."

Other characters will be developed as well. Armorine Sergeant Sirot, who is also an agent in the National Security Agency, seems to have his own agenda in the group. "That will come into play, and it will be heading towards a confrontation between him and Gunny. One of them will no longer be on the team after that," González explains. "There will be also be a mole in the Armorines, who will leak stuff. That won't come to a head for a while, but it's something to watch out for. Also, someone will die."

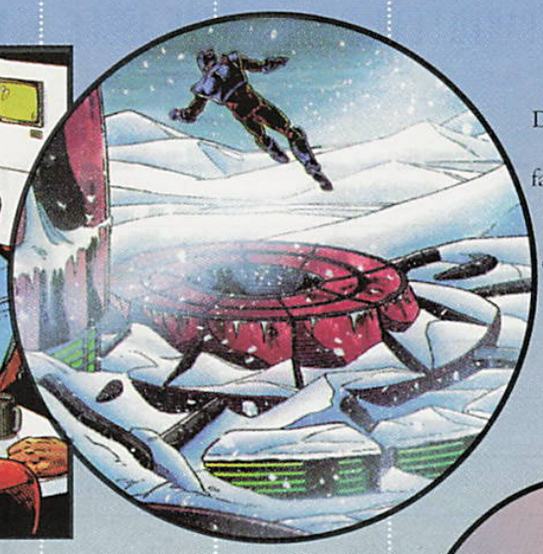
Of course, in addition to this intrigue, with a book like *Armorines*, there will definitely be plenty of action. When necessary, the Armorines will adapt to the missions they undertake. "Dr. Zahn will always be giving them new little gadgets, depending on the mission. [For] their underwater mission, they get a whole ballast and propulsion system so that they can maneuver. They will have whatever is appropriate for [each] mission. It will be the same when they go off into space. That is going to happen in issue #5 or #6," González says, because the government has discovered a new Spider Alien scheme. "The U.S. government is going to send the Armorines up into space, and they are going to kick ass." ☆



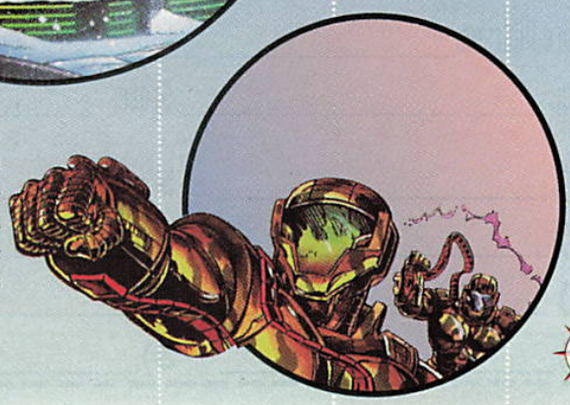
ARMORINES TIMELINE



Mar 1993
CIA agent Peter Garrett, Ms. Mandrake of the IRS, and several others meet in the Pentagon to discuss the danger of Aric Dacia and his X-O Manowar armor. Two weeks later, Project Deep Freeze is put into effect. Dr. Zahn has a brief chance to study the X-O armor.



Apr 1993
Despite setbacks caused by the failure of Project Deep Freeze, Colonel Gardner pushes the Armorine project ahead.



Mar 1993
Peter Garrett and Ms. Mandrake fake documents ordering the Armorines to attack Aric.

CONTEST

THE GRANDDADDY!

THE ENTIRE VALIANT UNIVERSE AWAITS YOUR GRASP IN THIS ISSUE. EVERY REGULAR-ISSUE VALIANT COMIC CAN BE WON; IT'S UP TO YOU TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE VALIANT UNIVERSE TO RECEIVE BIG, BIG STUFF! IN THE FINAL CONTEST IN THIS SPECIAL, YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF PREVIOUS VALIANT COVER ART IS THE KEY!

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WHAT YA GOTTA DO: WHAT WE HAVE HERE ARE SEGMENTS OF EIGHT VALIANT COMIC COVERS. YOU MUST IDENTIFY ALL EIGHT PARTICULAR ISSUES, **WITH ISSUE NUMBERS**, CORRECTLY TO WIN.

entries due by June 30

Grand Prize (One winner)

One extremely lucky Valiant fan will win the granddaddy of all prizes: **an entire run of regular-edition Valiant Comics** published from the company's first superhero book, *Magnus Robot Fighter* #1, through *Ninjak* #3! That's right, complete runs of *Magnus, Solar, Rai [and the Future Force], X-O Manowar, Harbinger, Shadowman, Archer & Armstrong, Eternal Warrior, H.A.R.D. Corps, Bloodshot, Turok, Secret Weapons, The Second Life of Doctor Mirage, Ninjak* and *Unity* will be awarded to the grand prize victor. With a prize like this, you know it's going to be a little difficult to win, so good luck!

Second Prize (One winner)

One lucky fan will be the winner of the complete run of *Magnus Robot Fighter*, from issue #0 on!

Third Prize (Five winners)

Five lucky winners will receive a set of *Unity* #0 and *Unity* #1.

Contest Rules

Fill in the coupon, including the blanks pertaining to each cover, and place the coupon in an envelope, and mail it to:

Valiant Contest #6
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
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No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and Randy Cartier. On the coupon, please print your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, the name and address of the store where you purchase comics, and the contest answers, and place the completed coupon in an envelope. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Valiant Contest #6, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Only one prize per household. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters by June 30, 1994. The random drawing will be conducted on July 1, 1994, by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after July 4, 1994, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Valiant Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920.

Name: _____

Age: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your Comic Store's Name: _____

Store Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

CONTEST #6 ANSWERS

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2) _____ 6) _____

3) _____ 7) _____

4) _____ 8) _____

TIMEWALKER

The immortal brothers Armstrong and The Eternal Warrior have amazing abilities, but their other sibling Ivar may be the most incredible of this long-lived trio. Ivar has the talent to locate and access inconsistencies in the time continuum—time arcs, as he calls them—in order to walk through time. After playing an important role in Valiant's upcoming crossover event Chaos Effect, Ivar will be receiving his own regular series.

"All you really know about Ivar is that he is Gil and Aram's brother. Some people may or may not know that he is the oldest one physically, but chronologically, he is the youngest one," says series co-writer Jon Hartz, who along with co-writer Bob Hall and artist Don Perlin will be chronicling Ivar's exploits. "By time travelling, he has only jumped around for about 700 years."

"My basic approach to *Timewalker* is to not do the same old tired time travel story where Ivar goes back to Abraham Lincoln's time, and either saves Abraham Lincoln or doesn't save Abraham Lincoln. Rather than deal with those types of historical elements, the actual history will be a backdrop, but the storylines that Ivar will be dealing primarily with are [parts of] Valiant history. Ivar may go back to Mesopotamia and deal with Kalam [the Eternal Warrior's son, who was kidnapped by the Mesopotamians in *Eternal Warrior* #1]," Hartz says.

"Another storyline that we may do takes place in the year 2028 on the moon. Ax and Bloodshot are fighting on the moon, and Ivar is trapped on the moon base because Ax hasn't allowed anyone to be evacuated. He has closed off all the portals to the outside, and Ivar needs to get across the moon because he has to catch a time arc. He knows the only way he can get out is he either has to help Bloodshot start the evacuation, or somehow he has to deceive Ax into opening the doors. That sort of directly leads into some of the things that we hinted at in *Rai* #0."

"So that is the way we are going to use Ivar," concludes Hartz. "He is going to jump around to different time periods, and show what has happened in the Valiant Universe at different times and different places."

TIMEWALKER TIMELINE

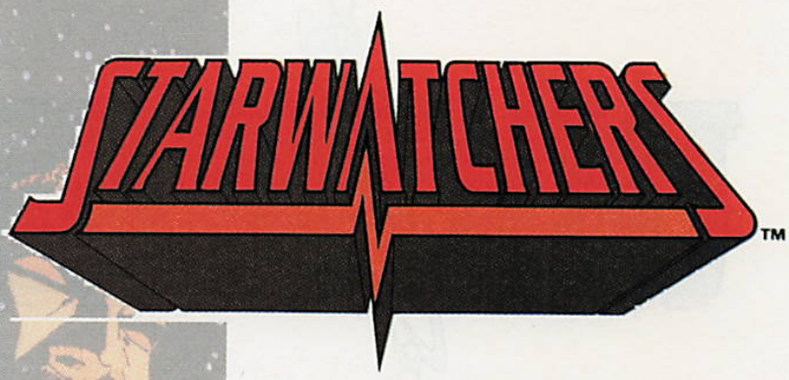
3270 BC
Ivar is born.

37 BC
Ivar spends time in Egypt.

1066
Ivar assists his brothers Gilad and Armstrong, and Geomancer Angelique D'Terre in attempting to avert the French Revolution.

May 1993
Ivar is kidnapped and put on trial at Stonehenge by people accusing him of displacing them out of their proper times. At the end of the ordeal, Solar attempts to send Ivar to 37 BC, but robot F-7 disrupts the time jump, causing them both to end up in 4002.

4002
Ivar and F-7 arrive in North Am; there they help Magnus fight Malevs, and leave on another arc before the secret of time travel falls into Malev hands.



Protectors of the Future

After repelling the Malev onslaught, Earth in the 41st century will have to deal with an invasion of a different sort. The Starwatchers who visit Earth in the year 4003 are very different beings from their predecessors, who left planet Earth over a millennia previously.

Tony Bedard, who will be writing the new Valiant series starring the Starwatchers, reveals that this nearly omnipotent race is not the normal variety of aliens. "After the Harbinger Wars had settled in the year 2989, H.A.R.D. Corps took a bunch of their people and left Earth," Bedard explains, recounting events that transpired in *Rai #0*. "They left Earth to find another planet to colonize, and generations of these folks grew old and died as the ship traveled. They eventually evolved into the Starwatchers."

"The Starwatchers are like a polyglot of all races," Bedard continues. "They have golden skin and almond-shaped eyes. They developed their own nanotechnology, and these microscopic computers that they have in their brains contain the Harbinger powers database that they call on. They don't have to call on Softcore anymore like the H.A.R.D. Corps people do. They can just mentally will themselves to have these powers. In effect, it is almost like a whole race of Omega Harbingers—like Harada."

But the Starwatchers do have limits. According to Bedard, something occurred in the Starwatchers' undisclosed past that caused them to place restrictions on their actions and abilities. "They have a directive kind of hard-wired into themselves that won't let them kill. Also, they can't have children, so there is a finite number of these people. They don't wield all of their powers anymore, and they are broken up into three power classes. You have the folks who have the strength and invulnerability powers. You have Gunners, who are the energy projectors; they can [produce] lightning bolts, stun rams, et cetera. Then there are the Scouts who have flight, invisibility, and super speed. They are more or less recognizance and infiltration type people."

The Starwatchers will end up presenting Magnus with an interesting problem when they come to Earth near the end of the Malev War. "When they show up and help out in beating the Malevs, they then want to stick around and institute themselves as peace keepers on Earth," Bedard says. "Magnus is almost afraid of the sort of peace that the Starwatchers propose. They could basically push humanity right out. He arrives at an agreement with them that as long as everything is quiet and peaceful on Earth, they will leave only one Starwatcher on Earth as an ambassador."

The Starwatchers will end up presenting Magnus with an interesting problem when they come to Earth near the end of the Malev War.

"When we start the *Starwatchers* series, we are mainly going to deal with another team out on their space station," Bedard continues. "They construct a space station right at the beginning of *Starwatchers* #1, and that is their main base of operations. *Starwatchers,* for the most part, isn't going to have a whole lot to do with Earth. It is going to deal with more of the colonies and the different worlds in the solar system."

A race as powerful as the Starwatchers will likely run into some formidable opponents. "Through the course of the series, a villain is going to show up who is powerful enough to give these guys a run for their money," Bedard reveals, likening this mysterious new character to Master Darque in terms of sheer menace, although he won't have the type of powers that Darque has. "He will be a very complex and interesting villain, and that is all going to be slowly revealed during the course of the series. Also, as a result of Chaos Effect, I'm hoping [the characters] might wind up with Erica Pierce in the future."

The storyline will ultimately focus on one six-man team of Starwatchers, with about 30 others manning their space station as background characters. The series will be a galactic space opera in the tradition of the best years of the Legion of Super-Heroes and Green Lantern, Bedard concludes. "It will be a real cosmic saga."

One of the highlights of the *Starwatchers* series that is sure to interest fans is that each issue will be fully colored in Valiant Vision. This means that those who possess the special Valiant Vision glasses can read the series in 3-D. Of course, the series can be read as a normal comic book without the glasses. That means readers will have two different ways to experience another exciting new Valiant title, *Starwatchers.* ☆

THE VISITOR

Valiant's Mysterious 18th title

"*Visitor* will be a superhero action-adventure in the purest sense," says Kevin VanHook of the upcoming Valiant series which he will write. "Whereas you could look at *Solar* and say you definitely have a science fiction slant, or that *Bloodshot* has an action-adventure or mystery slant, this is superhero fiction, and I'm going to go to the roots of superhero fiction."

Of course, the roots of the superhero genre are in the Golden Age of comics, which started with Superman. "I want to go to the things that initially caught the romance of the genre," VanHook explains. "Things that add up to why a superhero is more than human."

The new title will be set in the present-day Valiant Universe. "There will be a mystery surrounding its origin, and that will be revealed over the first six issues," says VanHook. "I think it will very much have the feel—to cite examples—of John Byrne's *The Man of Steel* [mini-series]; that kind of approach. Sort of reinventing the wheel, even though this wheel hasn't been here."

"The Visitor is about the only thing that could have made me give up [writing chores on] *Eternal Warrior*," VanHook continues. "I had become pretty attached to writing about a character with which I could explore 5,000 years of history. The Visitor will give me a chance to play with a different legend, however—that of a stranger in a strange land, and how he will react to a new environment. Or more importantly, how the new environment will react to him."

Before The Visitor's new title starts, he will make an appearance during the Chaos Effect storyline this summer. Befriended by the monks of Ladakh, the Visitor is an eyewitness to the events which unfold during Chaos Effect.

This Visitor from another world, who is apparently stranded on Earth, then finds himself thrust into human society. Why he is here, and how he will deal with his new world, remains a mystery. His otherworldly visage—closely matching numerous descriptions of other alien sightings—sparks a combination of fascination and fear in all who see him.

Valiant artist Bernard Chang will handle pencils on the title. "I'm really looking forward to working on *The Visitor*," Chang says. "I think Kevin and I will be able to throw a few new curves into the superhero genre, and some of the surprises early in the series are really going to blow the fans away!"

The Visitor will debut this December, becoming Valiant's eighteenth and final regular monthly title. If the excitement in the Valiant offices is any clue, 1994 will be the year of the Visitor. ☆

Valiant has well-publicized the fact that the Valiant Universe is going to "max out" at 18 regular titles. But just because that prodigious achievement is drawing closer, that doesn't mean we're going to stop seeing new things from these guys. In fact, according to **STEVE MASSARSKY**, **JON HARTZ**, **BOB LAYTON**, and **FRED PIERCE**, now that we are approaching the full realization of the Valiant Universe,

the fun is just beginning.

Licensing

According to Valiant VP-Marketing Jon Hartz, licensing the Valiant characters for use in other media will be a major order of business in 1994-95. **"You are going to see us be more aggressive in terms of licensing,"** Hartz confirms. "We have held off waiting for the right year to happen in 1992-93. In that time, we cut our deal with Upper Deck, for a non-sports trading card license. The Valiant Era was developed in conjunction with both Upper Deck and Valiant, and we are real excited about it, because it was received real well. In 1994, we have a very unique card set coming out from Upper Deck, which is going to be sort of a who's who of our universe. It will be called *The Valiant Files*, and will be out in May [see sidebar].

"Valiant is a **big enough name** now that in '94, it is time to go out and develop more [licenses]," Hartz continues. "We are ready for new products. There are a lot of different types of licenses that we have held off on because we wanted a certain type of growth pattern. We will now be more aggressive in going after some of those."

"We also wanted the right licensees," adds Valiant Publisher/CEO Steve Massarsky. **"We were offered over a million dollars** by a video game company that didn't make great games," he says. "What is the sense? To release a license and have a short window of excitement and probably a bad game doesn't help our fans, it

doesn't help us, and it doesn't help our characters."

"I come from a background of managing property—**rock and roll**—and I look on these characters the same way. There is a right time for everything. You have to do everything in the proper season. You don't try to play Madison Square Garden when you're in the position in which you should really be playing in small clubs. We should have a solid offer soon on a video game license from the company we wanted. We sought out a company that we felt made quality games and marketed them well."

Massarsky declined to say exactly which company is involved with the new games, but foresees that **Valiant will have a strong presence in the video game market** within the next two years. "We expect to have stuff on the market as early as a year to 18 months from now," he estimates. "Probably the regular video games will come out in 1995, and the super hi-tech stuff, 1996-97." Massarsky wouldn't reveal what the "super hi-tech stuff" would entail, but promised it would be a combination of the comic book and video game media unlike anything ever seen.

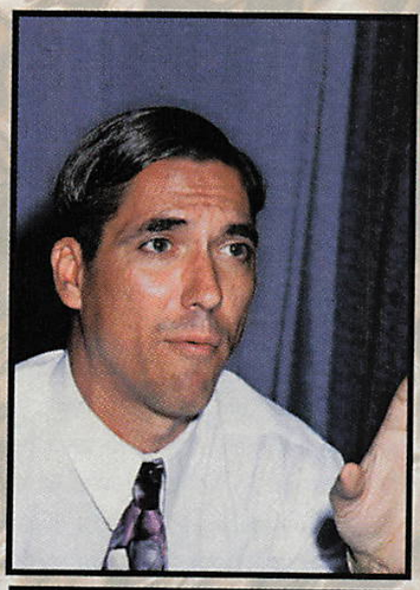
There are also Valiant movies on the horizon, but again, the transition of the Valiant Universe into another medium will take the right partner to do properly. "We want to be in the film business, [but] I want to know we are making movies when we decide to, not just selling options to a bunch of different people," Massarsky explains. "Everybody wants to get into movies—right from the top through the bottom of this company, but I don't want to be in the option business, I want to be in the movie business.

"I don't want to sit and make a bunch of deals just to make a bunch of deals. We have been having ongoing conversations with two to three major studios about doing a five-picture deal where in fact we form Valiant Films," Massarsky discloses. "And **Valiant Films** will work in conjunction with producers and directors to develop property. Again, it will take the right ties and the right people. When we find the right people and the right deal, we will take it."

"We will make sure they are really happy, not just putting a movie on paper," Jon Hartz adds. "Some comic book projects have been opted for film for ten to fifteen years. [These include] Silver Surfer and Iron Man, and there are tons and tons more on the list, but they don't go anywhere. I just don't want to add more properties to that list."

Massarsky explains that the company's big impetus for doing films is that producing movies will make other licensing deals easier. "Everything else drives off the media. It is really silly to do a toy license for Toys 'R Us that people have never heard of," he says. "What drives the X-Men sales now with toys is that there are X-Men cartoons. **You need the media to make the rest of the license go."**

However, the company will exercise caution when looking into an animated series. "With an animated series, we have to be careful, because we have a pretty sophisticated audience," opines Massarsky. "I don't want to take a terrific book like



BOB LAYTON

Dr. Mirage and suddenly make it a **Saturday morning cartoon** that appeals to a six-year-old. We are very mindful about what we are doing, and everything is planned [as part of] a long-term strategy."

Product Innovations

Besides being noted for the quality of the contents of their books, Valiant is also renowned for the format and production of the books themselves. Chromium covers and Valiant Vision are just two of the product enhancements the company has introduced in the past year, and many other innovations should be forthcoming as you read this. It is the job of Valiant VP-Operations Fred Pierce to turn ideas into realities when it comes to new formats and product enhancements. Pierce explains how Valiant has been able to stay on the cutting edge of comic production technology, and why the company will continue to be there in the future.

"Because of **the preeminence we have in the industry** and because of the fact that we aren't a big corporation, a lot of the stuff we have used has gone to Marvel and DC first, [but] Marvel and DC have passed on some things. They are big corporations, and it is not as easy for them to work," Pierce explains. "What generally happens in our company—since we all work as a team—is that basically Jon and I will see [the enhancement technology] first. We'll decide if it is economically feasible. Let's say there is a wonderful process that Bob [Layton] likes. If it's too expensive, Bob recognizes the fact and doesn't waste time looking at it. If I say, 'Look, I can make this process economically feasible,' then we go on to the next step: marketing-wise, does it make sense, and will the comic book fan like it? Then, once it has passed those two phases, Bob will take a look and say 'no, I don't like it,' or 'yes, this is how we'll make it work."

Pierce emphasizes that he and the entire Valiant team always work together to produce something that goes beyond being a simple gimmick to being a true enhancement. "I know people hear that from every company," he admits. "But with us, it is true. **We work as a team.** The marketing, art, editorial, and operations aspects don't work against each other—we really work together.'"

According to Pierce, that teamwork pays off when it comes to finding **exciting new enhancements**. Ideas for new enhancements can come from literally anywhere. "Somebody will see it from the company and say 'wow'," notes Pierce. Such was the case with one enhancement that is currently being considered for future projects. "Steve walked by a store and said, 'That is an interesting [product]; let me go in and check.'

"Another way it will work is guys will walk into us and—I get this in the mail all the time—want to do this and this... We pass on 99 out of 100, but one or two of them we will try to put it in.

But finding a neat idea for a comic enhancement is only the first step of the process. Next comes determining its feasibility for Valiant. "I'll negotiate with the guy on pricing, and sometimes, because we have so much printing experience and other experience, we can say, 'If we do it this way, we can make it **cost-effective**'," Pierce explains. "I break everything down to a 100th of a penny for the comic books, so [the printing companies] respect what we do a little bit more."

Once a given technology is discovered and proven feasible, Pierce's next job is to find a way for the Valiant version to be unique in the marketplace. "With the chromium covers, we had the guys in, and said, 'Look, we want exclusivity for X amount of time.' **We want to be the first ones to bring it out,"** says Pierce. His task then often entails developing new ways to make the technology work. "We will design different products around it, just to make it work financially, then once we see how it works with a financial model, we go on and bring it forward. For instance, [regarding] the *Superman* [#82] chromium cover, I designed the layout of how that works with the vendor. We passed on it, and then DC picked that up. But the whole strip with the chrome glued to it was my design."

"Now what we use is the double wraparound chromium," Pierce states. "The reason we passed on it [the chromium strip design] is **we fell in love with the wraparound chromium product. There is no better product.** It is a beautiful product, and that has really become the standard."

And it is setting those standards with new products that has become Valiant's forte. "Like the pocket for the cards," Pierce says, speaking of the Upper Deck Valiant Era Bonus cards that were included in this February's Valiant comics. "Bob said, '**we don't want to bag the books; they should be read**.' You should be able to pick it up and read it, but the only saleable version is the [unopened] bagged version in the ridiculous market that we have. So we came up with the plastic pockets."

"We didn't promise the pocket; we promised a card, and we knew we could polybag if necessary, but that is not fun," Pierce exclaims. "What is fun is to deliver the card to you in a different way, and that is what we are looking for. **We all respect what is fun. That is part of what the business is."**

In the same spirit, Valiant has so far avoided doing hologram covers, preferring to wait until the company can do it

uniquely. "Do we have a way we can do them differently? Do we have a way we can do it best? Not yet," Pierce admits. "I haven't gotten rid of the idea, and I'm in touch with a lot of hologram guys. There are a couple of guys whose work we like very much, but we haven't found a way to make it fun for Valiant. Why should we bring it to the market after other companies? There are already so many of them. We just haven't found the right way to do that yet. When we bring it to the market, it will be the most fun and the coolest. It will have that kind of kick to it. That is what we are working to do. That is how we work."

The Editorial Edge

A universe is not an easy place to run. There is more to Valiant Senior VP/Editor-in-Chief Bob Layton's job than just overseeing the work of his artists and writers. Layton was forthcoming with **some of the secrets of the Valiant Universe's success**—which don't seem to be all that secret: just hard work, vision, and maybe a little craziness.

"The way to keep a universe from getting stagnant is to treat the characters with respect. It is a simple proverb that is destined for Slurpee cups, and that's about it," Layton laughs. "Our characters are characters that have evolved and changed. I think the real difference between our universe and all of the other ones is that **anybody here could die**."

"Coming up in a month or so here, we will destroy the X-O armor. [It is] gone. Everybody is like 'are you out of your blank, blank, blank mind?!' When something seems like that—off the wall—when it is that drastic of a change, to me that is great, that is high drama. But suddenly we are without this weapon that we had for so long. **What is Aric going to do now?** Is he going to get more armor? All of that stuff just creates a whole new excitement for the character," Layton says.

"So 18 titles for me just means that **all of the satellites are in orbit**, and we will see what evolves on each of the worlds," he continues. "I have ideas for other universes. **Valiant is an entertainment company**; it is not just a comic book company. We have never stated we are just going to put out 18 comics and coast. Most of these characters were designed to be translated into the mass media."

In fact, Layton thinks that kind of accessibility is important to expanding Valiant's market. "Whenever I'm thinking about working with these guys on a concept, one of my criteria is, **how does this translate?**" he reveals. "Often, there is no way you could ever convince somebody outside of comics as to what the origin of this character is. **Some characters' origins just go on forever**.

"Valiant comics are designed to be read by anyone," Layton states. "Every month, I run the Valiant line through what I call the civil test, to make sure that people on the street—non-comics readers—could sit down and read a Valiant comic, and actually have it make sense to them. Most other comics fail that."

JON HARTZ

Layton's endeavors to **expand Valiant's readership** have also included trying to reach female readers. "First of all, I created **a book for women**," he says, speaking of his *The Second Life of Doctor Mirage*. "There is so little being written for women out there. Women have different interests than guys, and power-tripping isn't one of them, [but] comics can be a big power trip for adolescent males.

"We have to be sensitive to the readership," explains Layton. "You just cannot run out and grab a bunch of women and bring them in here, and say, 'Here, read *Bloodshot*, and you are going to love it.' Well, I can tell you right now that *Bloodshot* is a great book, but it is not the perfect book for women. You have to have a product that is going to attract them. Getting more women into the business is one thing; the trick is creating a product that does not alienate the rest of your audience."

Layton says that he makes sure that **Valiant comics are accessible to both men and women.** "You do not see the exploitation of women in my books. These are not adolescent male fantasies that we are creating," he maintains. "There is plenty of product out there for that. I am not interested in turning ours into that. I want women readers, and I think that the best thing is to not turn them off. I think that most comics turn women off with the excessive violence and the sexist portrayal of women in comics. They are immediately turned off by that."

"We have to grow up as an industry, and realize that if we want to expand, we have to be sensitive to that audience," Layton asserts. "I think *Mirage* was a first step. I feel that I have a huge feather in my cap for that. To me, that was a goal. I just wanted to prove that we could write **good stories with good characters**, and still maintain the audience that we have, yet appeal to an outside audience. Paul [Fairchild] tells me that there is this one comic shop that is right across the street from an all-girl school. [The students] come in once a month, and the only comic book that they buy is *Dr. Mirage*. **A female from this school came in once just to buy *Dr. Mirage*. Now they read it every month**."

But creating a comic that appeals to both men and

Upcoming Projects in 1994

In addition to the highly anticipated Chaos Effect and the upcoming *Timewalker* and *Starwatchers* series (all of which are covered elsewhere in this special), Valiant has a well-balanced schedule of new titles and card products on tap for 1994.

GEOMANCER: The new Geomancer title will feature one of the select few Geomancers who have acted as the voice of the Earth since 3,500 BC. However, the current Geomancer Geoff McHenry will not be the protagonist of this series. "Geoff McHenry is taken out of the loop through Chaos Effect," Valiant editor Kevin VanHook explains.

"The results of that is that the world is without a Geomancer—but there has to be a Geomancer. I've stated [in past stories] that there were dark times, and during one of the Earth's dark ages, the *Book Of The Geomancers* was written. [People] knew there would be a time that the Geomancer of that era could not physically impart the knowledge [to a successor]. That is a very terrible time for the Earth. Part of Gilad's storyline through 'Chaos' will be to go and find this person who will take the mantle—the new Geomancer."

Bob Layton sheds further light on the new Geomancer, and explains that Geoff won't be gone forever. "For those who want to consult their hymnals (*Rai* #0), turn to the pages of *Rai* #0, where Geoff has no history from this point until 1999. Also, when Geoff comes back in 1999, he is wearing the same clothes. This will explain it.

"Gilad is forced to get a new Geomancer, and teach this person," Layton continues. "At first, you won't see the actual rituals. This guy is very interesting, because he is a real hard-bitten veteran of the police force, a cop who was blinded in the line of duty. But he is the eyes and ears of the Earth; he knows everything the Earth tells him. I thought it would be an interesting kind of diversion to Daredevil; we have kind of lost sight of what Daredevil is all about. That, and the fact that I wanted a fighting Geomancer, is the closest way I can describe him—somebody who doesn't need Gil."

"Even though Gil is sworn to protect the Geomancer, this man doesn't like Gilad and doesn't really want him around, because he also has his own agenda," Layton explains. "This is going to free Gilad in some ways from being bound to the Geomancer, at least for a time, which is going to give [the new Geomancer] a chance to decide what he is going to do with himself. I really wanted the Geomancer to be a much more independent kind of character."

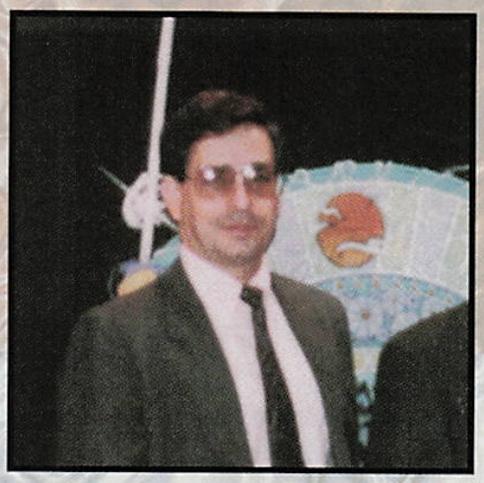
THE HARBINGER FILES: Toyo Harada is possibly the most visible character in the Valiant Universe, but the only glimpse readers have seen of this enigmatic man's past thus far has been on the coupons bound in *Harbinger* #1 through #6. Harbinger Files #1: Harada, written by Fred Pierce, will show readers what made Toyo Harada the would-be world dominator he is today. The story will tie into Harada's first appearance in *Solar* #3.

Continued on page 85

women inside and outside the comic market is just half the battle. Valiant then has to place that comic right in front of its audience. "We have to create interest in the character," Layton explains. "Which means we have to do a mailing of *Dr. Mirage*. We may have to buy someone's mailing list, and mail out a free copy to everyone who is on the list. It could be that we do a movie, and that movie or television show breeds interest in the comic. I mean, we just got Lois and Clark; I think **Dr. Mirage is far more interesting** than that thing. We have to reach outside to the audience, and tell them that this is a great comic here about these two people in love, and where a relationship happens in a unique circumstance. That is what we have to do. That's why I have the greatest marketing staff in the world. **They are my partners**; they know how to do it."

Year of the Yearbooks

One way that marketing staff will be broadening the Valiant audience in the coming year is by showcasing their characters in Yearbooks. "[Our] Yearbooks have big events stories," says Steve Massarsky. "Something that causes a real profound change in the characters."



FRED PIERCE

"The idea is to get top talent, and tell the story out of context from the regular monthly books, but on the other hand, add a new glimpse to each of those characters," adds Jon Hartz. "We want to have the story be **a real character-oriented storyline featuring art by some of the top artists**—people who can't necessarily do a normal monthly book for us, but who do want to do stuff for us.

"We now have plenty of characters that could be done up in Yearbooks, so one of our goals for this year is to sign up people for these, and then hopefully by springtime, make a big announcement [about] the guys that we have already contacted that seem interested in doing stuff," says Hartz.

And there is certainly no shortage of creators who are interested in working in the Yearbook format for Valiant. Several have already been lined up for upcoming Yearbooks. "We contracted the Mike Baron/Paul Smith Magnus last year, and [Smith] has turned in about seven pages," Hartz relates. "I can also say that **Glenn Lumsden and Dave DeVries are going to be doing a Ninjak Yearbook**. There will also be **a Bloodshot Yearbook by Michael Bair and Kevin VanHook**, which looks terrific, too—it is really coming out great."

"Michael Bair is still underrated," adds Bob Layton. "He has [done] tremendous work at Marvel and other places, and I don't think they have color and production values that we have. Yearbooks are a great chance for some of these guys to flourish."

Another creator who will certainly be flourishing in the Yearbook format is artist Bart Sears. "Bart has agreed to do an **X-O Yearbook**," says

Steve Massarsky. "Jorge [González], who was always the regular writer, will do it. The story is really great, because it is something we have been looking at throughout the Valiant history, and haven't really gotten to somehow.

"The Eternal Warrior and Aric have met on the battlefield. It took so long that neither one can really remember the other guy, because one left the other for dead," Massarsky relates. This battle took place in Aric's world of the fifth century. The two have met in the 20th century, and they are going to finally recognize each other and try to finish the brawl 1,500 years later. "It is kind of designed for Bart, too, because he loves barbarians and stuff like that," Massarsky adds.

The upcoming **Turok Yearbook** also promises to be something special. The story will feature the completely unexpected return of Turok's arch-enemy Mon-ark. Mon-ark was apparently killed in *Turok* #3, but his bionically-augmented brain survived intact, and will soon be given a human body, **creating a major new villain for the Valiant Universe**.

These and many more Yearbooks are in production or in the planning stages, according to Jon Hartz, who says, "Our goal is to come out with a Yearbook a month, and make that book really special."

The Next Universe?

As Valiant has closed in on title #18, completing the foundation of the Valiant Universe, there has been much public interest about the company undertaking **a second line of comics**.

Many of the rumors have revolved around a creator-owned line, but that doesn't seem probable under current market conditions. "There are so many [creator-owned imprints] out there right now that are in the experimental stage," explains Jon Hartz. "You have Bravura, Legend, Image—[so many] different creator-owned lines already existing that 1) I don't think there are any creators left to be a part of it, and 2) the success or failure hasn't really been determined yet."

But even discounting a creator-owned imprint, another line of comics published by Voyager Communications, in addition to the Valiant Universe, seems likely at some point in the company's future. "It is a logical kind of growth pattern when you take a look at who we consider to be our basic competitors, which would be Marvel, DC, and Malibu," Hartz continues. "They all have different lines. Malibu has three to four different lines of comics—they put out something like forty comics. DC puts out eighty to ninety—they have the Vertigo line, they have what they call the Superman/Batman line, and Milestone. Marvel is the same way. They have Epic, Marvel UK, the regular line—all of those different kinds of things where you have a particular line of comics for a particular marketplace."

"I think there are a lot of potential ways to make a new universe, and Bob has some very strong ideas that he has been in development with, and that he and Jon have had discussions on," adds Steve Massarsky. "There are a bunch of ways to approach it, and I think probably by late March, we will have to really start focusing on it."

Valiant's achievements in the past three years **have made the company one of the most respected names in comics**. With the Valiant Universe running full-blast, various licensing deals in negotiation, and a new universe probably on the horizon, the next three years look even more exciting. ☆

Continued from page 84

"If you look at the end of *Solar* #3, it looked like Harada died," says Pierce. "We learn in *The Harbinger Files* how he lived.

"The story also gives you a basic understanding of this man," Pierce continues. "Harada doesn't view himself as a bad guy. He views himself as a guy with the proper vision of the world, and he wants to make the world a safer place. Now, we have used Solar as a good guy, but Solar destroyed the world [his 'alternate' world]. Maybe he means well, but isn't the world safer in Harada's hands than in Solar's hands? Who would you rather have in control—this guy who means well, or this guy who really understands the way the world works? And that is Harada's point of view.

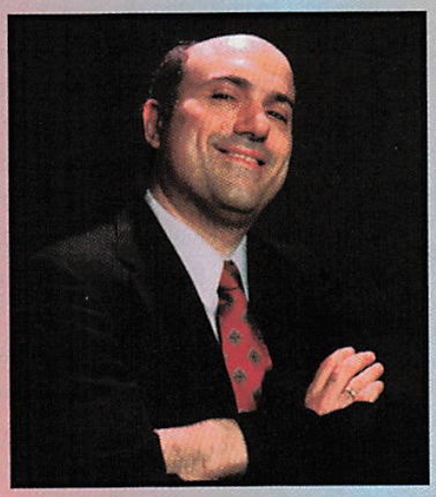
"Is Harada really a bad guy? He has taken a weird group of people and assembled them into a force. Otherwise, they were just a bunch of weird guys. [*The Harbinger Files: Harada #1*] will show you how Harada survived [his encounter with Solar], and will give you flashbacks of his past, and show you how he became this world power," Pierce concludes. After the Harada issue, other Valiant characters will be featured in similar "File" type issues.

THE VALIANT FILES: Hot on the heels of its successful Valiant Era I and Valiant Era II card products from Upper Deck, Valiant will be introducing yet another innovative card product with the Upper Deck company, which is noted for its outstanding production values in the card market. *The Valiant Files* will be one of the most unique card sets ever produced. "The idea is that you, as a fan, can own the same files as Harada," Jon Hartz explains. "[The cards] will contain information [such as] who Solar is, what his powers are, and more importantly, give you insight into the character of Harada and the Harbinger organization."

Project collaborator and Valiant Archivist Seaborn Adamson elaborates upon this unique project. "Without giving too much away, essentially it is Toyo Harada's personal files on just about everyone in the Valiant Universe—what he knows about them, his personal assessment, etc. It's unlike anything that's been done before."

According to Adamson, the set will contain pickup art, plus all-new artwork by Andrew Wendel and Paris Karounos. Adamson also hints that Upper Deck and Valiant have conspired to create a totally unique package for this product. "Anyone who likes cards will probably buy a whole box, not just enough packs to complete a set."

And anyone who likes Valiant has much to look forward to this year.



STEVE MASSARSKY

Valiant's Premium Comics

Where innovation reigns supreme

THE TWO COUPON OFFERS

In the beginning, the first Valiant premium comics to be offered were the *Magnus Robot Fighter* #0 editions, both with and without card. Valiant was one of the very first comic companies to successfully promote a coupon book offer, asking readers to clip the coupons available in *Magnus Robot Fighter* #'s 1 through 8 to obtain the comic featuring the Barry Windsor-Smith-rendered Magnus card. The version without the card was offered to retailers at a rate of one for every 100 issues of *Magnus* #1 ordered, making this book a rare one indeed (although we wouldn't recommend that any owners of the coupon version pull out their cards in order to make it rarer; it just doesn't make sense).

Following the enormous success of the *Magnus* coupon program, the Valiant crew offered the same promotion again, this time with *Harbinger*. In issues #1 through #6 of *Harbinger*, there was a coupon featuring a small vignette of "The Story of Harada". All six coupons, when clipped out and sent in, were redeemable for a copy of *Harbinger* #0. Many fans lamented about having to basically destroy their books (although you could still *read* them) in order to obtain another book, and the powers that be at Valiant listened, instituting their now well-known Gold Logo Program.

VALIANT GOLD

Valiant created quite a stir in comics fandom and retailing in 1992 with the creation of the company's Gold Logo program. Since kicking off with the *Archer and Armstrong* #0 gold edition that year, the program has continued to reward fans and retailers who support Valiant.

Valiant Direct Sales Manager Paul Fairchild, who administers the program, says that the practice of commemorating a special issue with a gold book was inspired by a similar practice in the music industry. "Part of the idea came with Steve [Massarsky], from the music business. [Massarsky was a manager of several music artists before joining Valiant.] In the music business, they have gold and platinum albums which they award people with when records do really well," Fairchild explains. "Through the combination of that idea and Jon Hartz's desire to give fans and retailers some kind of a premium for going out of their way to get the word out about Valiant, they came up with Gold Logo books."

Fairchild says that both fans and retailers are eligible to earn Gold Logo books. "They are equally available to fans and retailers, despite the fact that they [have] limited print runs. All Gold books are limited to 5,000 copies." Of the several ways retailers and collectors can obtain these books, he says, "I especially like it when fans and retailers get together to do something in a comic store. If a retailer holds a Valiant trivia contest in his store, then I'll send the retailer a couple of Gold Logo books, just to say thanks for the effort. Then, of course, I'll send Gold Logo books as prizes for the fans that read the most Valiant," Fairchild explains, giving another example of how Gold Logo books can be earned. "That is what is cool about the program. The fan didn't get [the special edition] by ordering 50 copies of our book, and the retailer didn't get it by ordering 50 copies of our book—they got it because they wanted to do something fun in the store with Valiant." Fairchild adds that Gold Logo books are also available to retailers who participate in Valiant's co-op program. Of all such Gold editions, the *Ninjak* #1 Gold Logo has become a very coveted book, due to both the title's popularity, and the fact that the chromium cover was printed on prismatic stock, giving the book a very striking, colorful cover effect.

Occasionally, Valiant has released other kinds of premiums as well. It's produced a couple of special retailer premiums, such as the Blue Bird version of the *Harbinger* Trade Paperback, the Pink Logo version of *X-O Manowar* #15, the Comic Defense System version of *H.A.R.D. Corps* #5, and the Fall Flings version of *Armorines* #0. There are also other premiums that have been available to fans, as well."Every once in a while, something comes up, like the chromium Ninjak cards that we gave away at conventions. We have no plans to do any other kind of premium, but when the company wants to do chromium covers, [the printer] has to do a test print and often print 200 copies of the cover just to see what it is going to look like in chromium," Fairchild explains. "We ask for the test prints, and we stock them back in the vault and pull them out for a convention or something. They make cool prizes, but we have no plans to do any other kinds of premiums right now." Another Ninjak note: the cards that were given away as prizes in San Diego could be found in two versions: a straight chromium version, and a prismatic chromium version, which is in seriously less availability (rumored to be 1,000), compared to the standard chromium card (rumored to be 5,000).

In conclusion, Fairchild says that while he obviously likes seeing that the Gold Logo books, and other premiums, are highly sought after, he enjoys seeing people earn them with a little work and ingenuity. "I would much rather [know that] a fan went out there and had fun with Valiant comics by hosting an art contest in the store or by dressing up as a Valiant character at a convention—that is much more fun than shelling out $50 for a book that you've probably already read, [but] has gold foil on the cover. There are some collectors that have the money and can buy them, but the fans that don't have that kind of budget should know that they don't have to save up their money to get these. They just have to do something cool for Valiant. Do it at a convention and we will give you a Gold book right there, and if you do it at home or at your comic store—take a picture of it, document it, and we will send the fan one, and the comic store a couple, as well."

The Guide to Gold Logo and Other Valiant Specialty Books

NOTE: All Gold logo books can be distinguished by the gold coloring in the "corner box" on the upper left-hand corner of the cover. In most (but not all) cases, the title logo on the cover is also colored gold on the Gold Logo edition.

The Valiant Validated Signature Series (VVSS) edition is a signed edition (limited to 5,500) of the listed comic, which comes with a certificate of authenticity signed by Steve Massarsky, has the Valiant Validated Signature Series logo embossed onto the front cover, and ships in a protective mylar with the Valiant logo embossed onto the flap.

BOOK	DISTRIBUTION & NOTES/DISTINCTIONS
Archer & Armstrong #0 Gold	**Gold Logo (Valiant's first Gold Logo book)**
Armorines #0 (Fall Flings Edition)	Special book distributed before it appeared as an insert in *X-O Manowar* #25. Distributed to retailers in attendance at Diamond Comics Distributors' "Fall Fling" retailer meetings. The stand-alone version has cardstock covers, and has house ads for Valiant comics on interior front and back covers, whereas the insert version has slick paper covers and has outside advertising on interior front and back covers.
Armorines #0 Gold	**Gold Logo** The "Fall Fling" logo which appears on all other versions of the book does not appear on this version.
Bloodshot #0 Gold	**Gold Logo**
Bloodshot #6 signed	While not strictly part of the Valiant Validated Signature Series, this signed edition was distributed to retailers by Valiant at distributor trade shows. Signed by Kevin VanHook and Don Perlin in red ink on cover. Was distributed in protective mylar stamped with Valiant logo on flap.
Deathmate Preview (*Previews* Edition)	August cover date. Bound in to Diamond Comics Distributors' *Previews* order catalog. Features new material not available else where. Unbound copies of this book exist.
Deathmate Preview (Advance Comics Edition)	July cover date. Polybagged with Capital City Comics' *Advance Comics* order catalog. Different contents from Diamond version.
Deathmate Preview (Comic Defense System Edition)	July cover date. Promotional insert in Comic Defense System products. Contents the same as *Advance Comics* Edition.
Deathmate Prologue Gold	Sales incentive for retailers. This book has gold foil where the regular edition has silver foil.
Deathmate Black Gold	Sales incentive for retailers. This book has gold foil where the regular edition has black foil.
Deathmate Yellow Gold	Sales incentive for retailers This book has gold foil where the regular edition has yellow foil.
Deathmate Blue Gold	Sales incentive for retailers. This book has gold foil where the regular edition has blue foil.
Deathmate Red Gold	Sales incentive for retailers. This book has gold foil where the regular edition has red foil.
Deathmate Epilogue Gold	Sales incentive for retailers. This book has gold foil where the regular edition has silver foil.
Eternal Warrior #1 Gold Embossed	In addition to the Gold Logo corner box on the cover, this book is distinguished from the normal *Eternal Warrior* #1 by the addition of gold foil on the Eternal Warrior title logo. This Gold Logo book was printed with the addition of the foil after the book's printer inadvertently released some *Eternal Warrior* #1 Gold Flats (see below) through normal re-order distribution channels.

Eternal Warrior #1 Gold Flat

This book has the normal Gold Logo corner box that is evident on all Gold Logo books. Some of these were accidently distributed through normal distribution channels.

Harbinger #0 Sendaway

Available by collecting coupons from *Harbinger* #1 through #6 and sending them in to Valiant. The sendaway version of this book has a pinkish background and a blue title logo, whereas the version available with the *Harbinger Trade Paperback* (1st printing) has a purple/blue background and a red title logo. The sendaway version also has cardstock covers, and "The Story of Harada" (taken from the send-in coupons) printed on the interior front and back covers.

Harbinger Trade Paperback
Blue Bird Edition

Available through Diamond Comics Distributors' Star System. This version has a large blue Harbinger symbol on the front cover where the normal version is black. Limited to 5,000.

Gold Logo

H.A.R.D. Corps #1 Gold

H.A.R.D. Corps #5
Comic Defense System Version

Promotional Premium. Has Comic Defense System logo on cover.

Magnus Robot Fighter #0
Sendaway

Available by collecting coupons from *Magnus Robot Fighter* #1 through #8 and sending them in to Valiant. The sendaway version of this book contains a trading card of Magnus by Barry Windsor-Smith bound in to the comic.

Magnus Robot Fighter #0

Although available to retailers through normal channels, quantities were very limited, and were based on the retailer's past orders on Magnus *Robot Fighter* #1.

Magnus Robot Fighter #21 Gold

Gold Logo

Magnus Robot Fighter #25 VVSS

Signed by Bob Layton and John Ostrander.

Ninjak #1 Gold

Gold Logo (with special "prismatic" chromium)

Ninjak #1 VVSS

Signed by Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti, and Mark Moretti.

Predator vs Magnus #1 Platinum

Sales incentive for retailers. Title logo was silver, with "platinum edition" clearly marked on cover.

Rai and the Future Force #9 Gold

Gold Logo

Rai and the Future Force #9 VVSS

Signed by Sean Chen and Kathryn Bolinger.

Second Life of Dr. Mirage #1 Gold

Gold Logo

Secrets of the Valiant Universe #1
Premium

Sales incentive for retailers. Format to be announced.

Shadowman #0 Gold

Gold Logo

Shadowman #0 VVSS

Signed by Bob Hall and Tom Ryder. To be available in April.

Turok #1 Gold

Gold Logo

Turok #1 VVSS

Signed by Bart Sears and Randy Elliott.

Unity #0 Red

Sales incentive for retailers. Unity Logo is red where normal version is blue.

Unity #1 Gold

Sales incentive for retailers. Unity Logo is gold where normal version is blue.

Unity #1 Platinum

Sales incentive for retailers. Unity Logo is silver where normal version is blue.

Unity Collection

Sales incentive for retailers. A two-volume softcover set collecting the entire Unity storyline. Covers by Frank Miller.

X-O Manowar #0 Gold

Gold Logo

X-O Manowar #15 Pink

Promotional Premium. Has X-O Manowar logo in pink. ☆

? ? ? ?

WONDER

is the foundation of all philosophy.

—Montaigne

? ? ? ?

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KNOB ROW

Behind the Scenes with Valiant's Future

What is Knob Row?

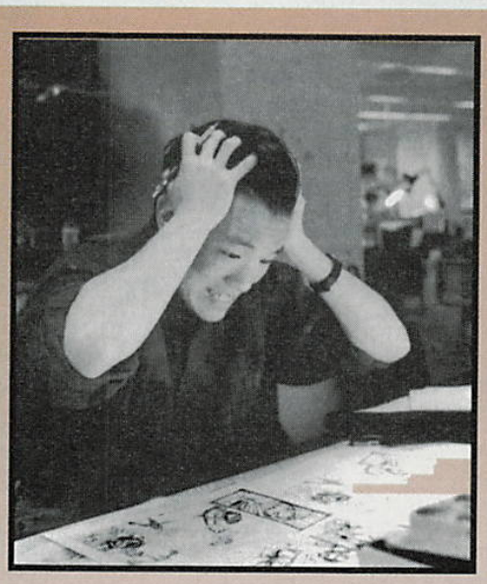
The concept started in the early days of the Valiant Universe with Editor-in-Chief Bob Layton. Knowing how much work it would be to assemble a full line of comics on a regular basis, Layton suggested that Valiant gather and train its own pool of creative talent to produce the books. That type of production studio was the foundation of the early days of the comic book business. Coining the name "Knob" to describe how new talent would be "turned and twisted like adjusting a knob" into capable pros, Valiant started Knob Row.

Andrew Covalt and Stu Suchit handling coloring duties.

The task of turning these Knobs falls to Bob Layton and Valiant Creative Director Don Perlin. One of Perlin's duties is to search out prospective Knobs. "I'm the submissions editor for art," Perlin explains. "What we do is ask people to mail in xerox copies and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. There are a lot of submissions, and to have somebody typing envelopes...it all becomes costly and time-consuming. Unfortunately, if you don't send in an envelope and the work is not up to par, we just discard it." As Valiant is concentrating on its existing universe, creator-owned properties should not be submitted. Writing submissions should be directed to editor Kevin VanHook.

Perlin looks for a variety of skills in any likely Knob. "First and foremost, we're looking for basic storytelling ability," he says. "Storytelling [consists of] page layout, the ability to compose a panel, and how you move from one panel to the next. The second thing is draftsmanship, and if we find that and we do get in touch with somebody, then you come into the personal kind of thing—[their] attitude and the way they take direction."

"We have a number of people from the Kubert School, and they have worked out well," Perlin adds. "It is a credit to the school, and to some of the teachers I know there, and to the people themselves. Training never hurt anybody, no matter what the subject line—drawing, composition, and just the idea of constantly doing it. Just like anything else, the more you do, the better you get at it."



A frazzled Bernard Chang.

Perlin explains that he helps Knobs develop the storytelling ability that has become the trademark of Valiant creators. "I am now walking some of the pencillers through the storytelling and drawing on a Turok project that we have going," he says. "I have a new fella that we are breaking in on an inventory story, and I help [him] plot the storytelling of it—the angles used, how you move the camera around,

the area of where the story is...the camera floats around somewhere, and you pick your shots to tell your story the best and most dramatic way."

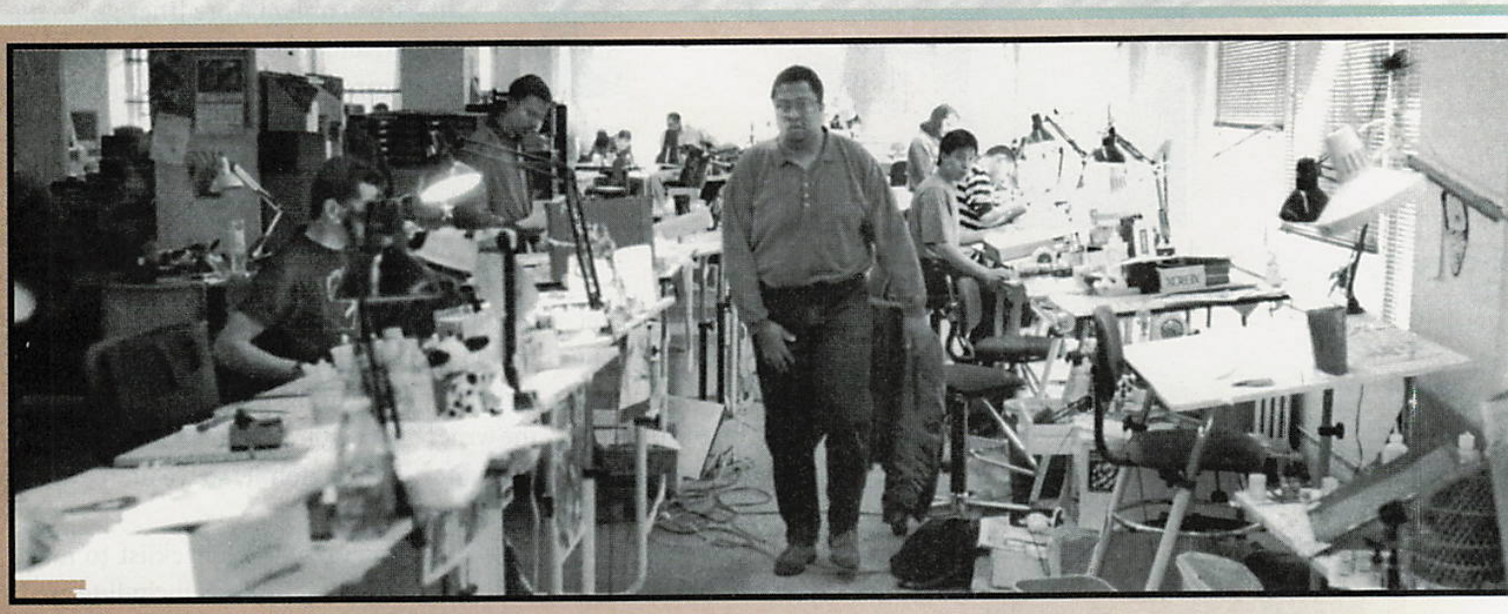
The inking stage is overseen by Perlin and taught by Bob Layton. "The simple stuff—looking at the background—seeing that the lines are clean, the line weights [are correct], and stuff like that, [is what] I deal with," explains Perlin. "Bob Layton is one the best inkers in the business, and his advice is probably the best you can get."

That advice is eagerly absorbed by the Knobs. "Bob deserves a lot of credit, because it is not easy to juggle the responsibilities of running a company and working with all the Knobs on an individual basis," says Knob Howard Simpson. "It is definitely not a job for the average man. I respect him a lot, and definitely appreciate the time he puts in with not only me, but all the other Knobs.

"It is a nice atmosphere working here, because you hear about a lot of competitiveness in the industry, but the competitiveness here is that everybody wants to do well, and when something doesn't come out well, everybody feels it, and we talk about it amongst ourselves on how to get better," Simpson continues. "It is nice to have somebody look over your shoulder and say, 'That hand is a little bit too big,' and you'll say, 'Oh yeah, you're right.' [You miss these problems] when you get too close to the work and you can't step back from it. So everybody is helping everybody out in ways like that, and it is really good. It is a really nice atmosphere to work in."

Although pencilling is sometimes looked

Scott Friedlander works on his computer to "Tweak" a Dr. Mirage layout.

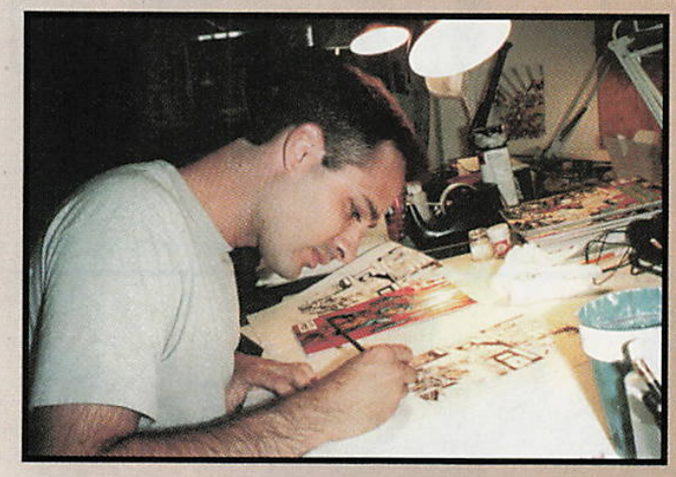


A panoramic view of "Knob Control Central".

Maurice Fontenot, looking entirely too happy while working.

upon as the "glamour job" of the comic-making business, it's really only a small part of the many tasks that go into the production of a comic book.

"After the scripts are approved and taken care of, they go to a letterer," explains writer Maurice Fontenot. In addition to lettering the word balloons, the letterer also puts in any sound effects and logos that are needed. "After they are lettered, penciled and inked, they put the balloons and the lettering on the board, and they shrink it down and set it up for the colors." Coloring can be a very labor-intensive part of the process, and often several Knobs will help color a single issue.

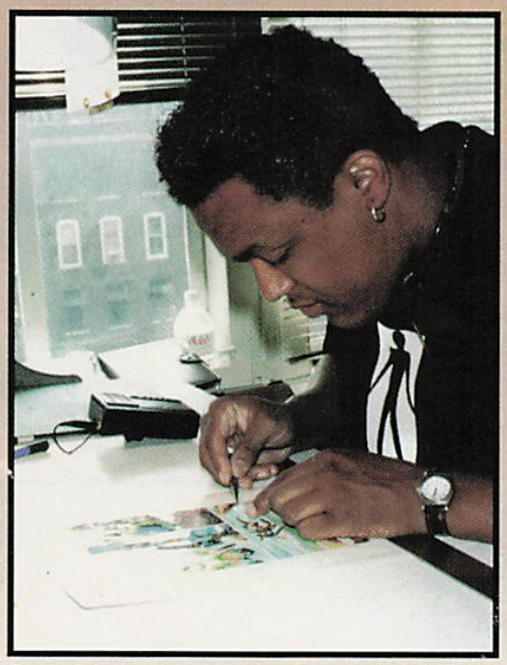


"When the pages are colored and lettered, the process is done. They send the pages off to the separator, who gets them ready to be printed into the books," Fontenot says, but that's not the end of the production. When the color separations come back, the Knobs then do what is called "cleaning the chromes." "What you get is a negative, and you have a black plate, a blue plate, a red plate, and a yellow plate—and you make sure the page is clean," Fontenot explains. "[The Knob] goes over and cleans off the borders, and knocks out the messy little dots and stuff. He'll clean that off and make sure it doesn't show when it is printed. He does it with an opaque marker, and he goes over it so the camera can't pass through the black spots."

The comic is then prepared to be sent to the printer. "It is our job to clean the film, account for every page, make sure they are in order before [they go] to the printer, and make a dummy so that the editor can read it," says Fontenot. "They go through it, read it, and circle any mistakes. One common mistake is that the indicia will sometimes say April and the cover will say May. Another common mistake [is getting] some of the credits wrong—the wrong guy penciled, the wrong guy inked—and like in *Ninjak* #1, we forgot to put anything at all. That was because the writer didn't indicate it to go anywhere, and the editor didn't catch it, so we didn't put it anywhere."

"We came up with a checklist to make sure that everything is there, including credits—the really little things that all build up into big things when you get a whole book. Especially when a book is late, and you are here on Saturday to get it out, and you have to get it out fast; that is when the mistakes happen," Fontenot elaborates. "But that is when you separate the professionals from the amateurs."

Overseeing this sometimes hectic process is Production Manager Darren Sanchez. "When the pages get to this stage—actually, it is my job even before this stage—I check to make sure that everything is done well, clean, straight, and square, [making sure] all the crops are done so the pages are cropped properly," Sanchez explains. "I do little things, like for instance, somebody got a thumb print on a page, and they tried to fix it with white-out. But when we get the film in, I'm going to have to clean that up on film."



Raphel Soler handles production details.

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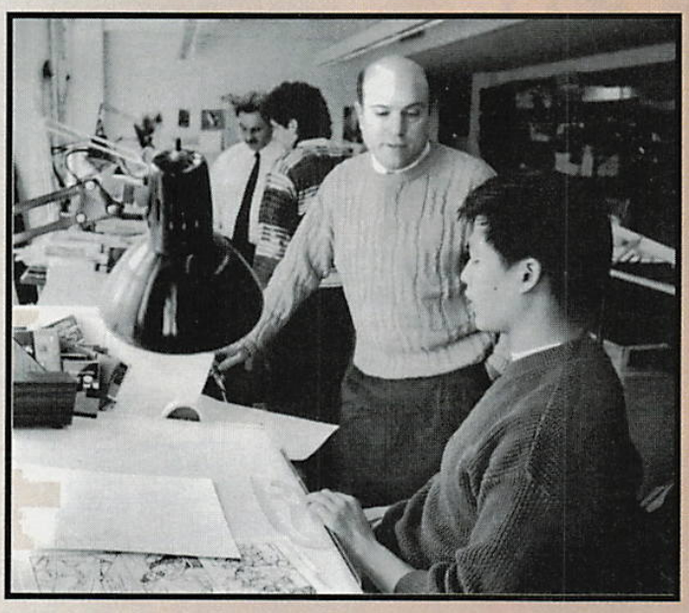

Valiant Chief Steve Massarsky checks in with artist Sean Chen.

Even at this stage, the work of the Knobs is not done. There is much more to publishing comic books than producing the books themselves. For example, Elim Mak handles the design work on some special projects. "Basically, I work on *Valiant Voice* and other layout and design [projects] on the computer," she explains. "Stuff that needs to be send to *Previews* [for solicitations in Diamond's order catalog], they give to me. We usually work on everything that is not related to the comic work."

This and other design work is overseen by Scott Friedlander. "As the Design Director, everything to do with advertising and publishing in regards to special projects, I at least take a look at if not help design and do finish art on. 50% of the time, I will also do whatever computer work Simon Erich needs help on. We essentially work hand in hand," he says.

Erich elaborates on their responsibilities. "I do ads, the bulletin board (in the back of each Valiant comic), and the accessory books—like *Darque Passages*, coming out with the *Shadowman Trade Paperback*," Erich says. "I do the trade paperbacks' introduction pages, title pages, all that kind of jazz."

Of all aspects of making a Valiant comic, it seems to be the attention to detail that gives Valiant an edge. "They [the production and design departments] both need fine-tune overseeing, and that is sort of what I do—the fine-tuned details. I should have been a brain surgeon, but instead I do surgery on the board and computer," Friedlander jokes. "I'm the details man."

And that seems to aptly describe all of Knob Row. They are the "details men" (and women) of Valiant. As a team, they keep the Valiant Universe running smoothly. ☆

KNOB ROW

PRODUCTION STAFF

Frank Bozyan
Randy Brozen
Scott Friedlander
John Kelly
C.R. Lister
Rafael Soler
Lee Stacy

Special Projects:
Simon Erich
Elim Mak
George Saravia

LETTERING

Joe Albelo
Jade
Robert C. Johnson
Bethanne Niedz
Adam Niedzwieki

INKING

Paul Autio
Winston Blakely
Jenifer Marrus
Phyllis Novin
Peter Palmiotti
Andrew Wendel

COLORING

Paul Autio
Maria Beccari
CJ
David Chlystek
Andrew Covalt
Mark Csaszar
Jade
Eric Hope
Shanna Layton
Eric Lusk
Mike McGuire
Mark Pusateri
Stu Suchit

PENCILLING

Howard Simpson

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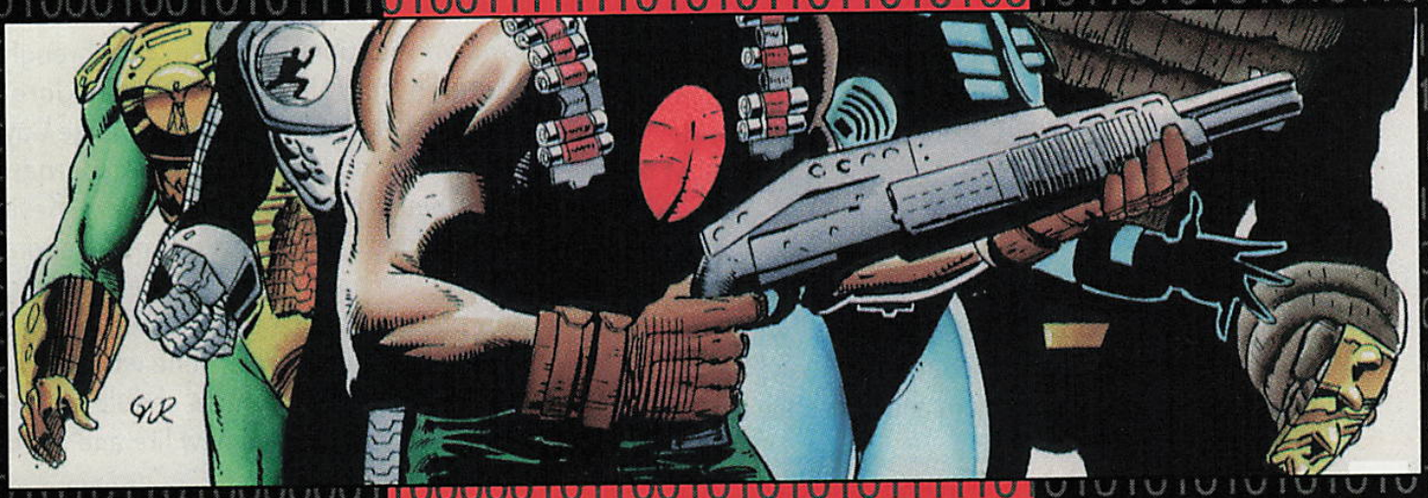

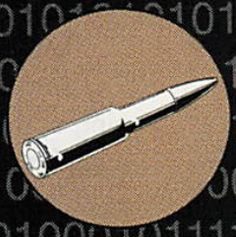

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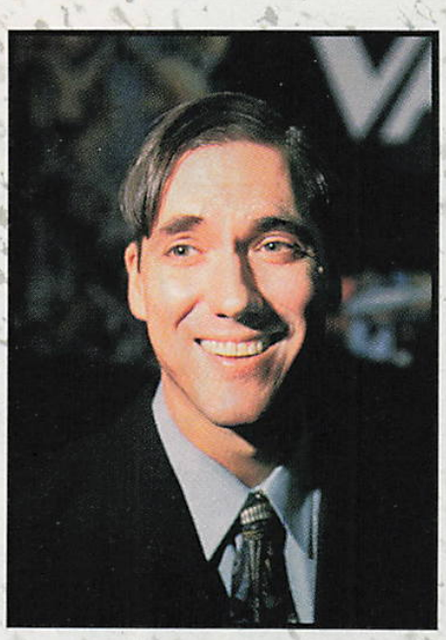
SOME PARTING WORDS

From Valiant Editor-in-Chief Bob Layton



People still come up to me at conventions and ask me if I'll ever go back to doing *Iron Man!*

Damn.

It seems you **can't** win sometimes.

Now I know how Woody Allen feels when people ask him if he's ever going to make any funny movies again.

I left **that** place some four years ago this month because I saw "the writing on the wall." Comics needed to evolve...as did I. Valiant is the result of that evolution.

Not that anything I've accomplished creatively is brand new. On the contrary. What I've done is gone backwards...to what made comics such a great entertainment form in the **first** place. Solid **storytelling** with the emphasis on **character.**

When DC was the number one publisher in the early sixties, Stan Lee was faced with the monumental task of trying to have Marvel give them a run for their money. At the time, his artistic resources were limited to individuals whose styles were considered too eclectic for DC's tastes.

Undaunted, Stan pressed on. And with the likes of the now legendary Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, he redefined this medium and forged the beginnings of an empire.

Thanks to the labors of those giants...comics had evolved.

But evolution is not always a good thing.

Inbreeding causes birth defects, and the beginning of the nineties saw the results of breeding in a confined space. The freshness of the sixties and seventies had vanished, and in its place...staleness and confusion. The same stories and styles were being mulched through the mixer so many times that comic book production became like a long-forgotten litany being mouthed by devotees who had no knowledge of what the sacred ritual meant.

Comics needed to evolve again to survive. A new gene pool had to be found.

It came in the form of Valiant.

It would have to be done much in the same manner of Marvel's humble beginnings. With a handful of seasoned veterans (Don Perlin, Stan Drake, and John Dixon, to name but a few), who remembered the aesthetic values of the Silver Age, I began seeking out "New Blood" to train in the "Old School" ways. I wanted to impart the same values in them that were taught to me by the likes of the great Wally Wood and Dick Giordano.

Plundering the halls of as many places as I could, I began my own vocational program that brought forth such talented Valiant creators as Jorge González, Tom Ryder, Maurice Fontenot, Mike Cavallaro, Kathryn Bolinger, Yvel Guichet, Bernard Chang, Sean Chen, Paul Autio, Tony Bedard, Kevin VanHook, Mark Moretti, Mike Leeke, Jim Calafiore, and many more who have gone on to become regular monthly contributors to our universe. In fact, the doors were now opened to anyone who shared our common vision of how comics should evolve.

The characters had to have new life and direction to them, as well.

A slant for the nineties...not just costumes with fancy names, but credible characters with real values and issues were born. Whether your preference is the tragic barbarian trapped in a time not his own...or the lovers that have been torn apart by evil forces they never dreamt existed...or the reluctant messiah, who leads the world from under the yoke of oppression, but secretly yearns for life as an ordinary man...or the musician that finds his very soul split in two by warring forces he cannot control...these are the types of characters that have evolved in the Valiant universe.

The trail is now clearly marked to the **Valiant Era of Comics.**

Many have joined us on the journey, and countless more will follow. That step in our evolution is inevitable.

Damn.

I guess you **can** win sometimes.

Editor-in-Chief

Bob Layton

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